A Book of Wild Flowers

Sandy Denny
Joni Mitchell
& Kate Bush

Jim Irvin

PREFACE

This book is an anthology of my writing on three remarkable songwriters and performers.[1] They are here in order of appearance. Sandy Denny made the earliest recordings in 1967. I first wrote about her in 1998, twenty years after her death, and realised to my amazement that I was one of the first to publish a biographical account of any sort. Joni Mitchell's career began soon after Sandy's and has, by contrast, been thoroughly documented. I wrote an overview in 2005, when she had effectively retired from music. Kate Bush's working life began in 1978. I met her briefly then, and have reviewed her several times over the years. All the pieces gathered for this volume have been considerably updated and expanded with fresh material.

Perhaps I ought to apologise to anyone who purchased this book expecting stuff about buttercups. The title was chosen because of the way all three artists, it seems to me, sprang up and grew in their own space, away from the mainstream. And, at the risk of pushing the metaphor until it squeaks, all three were also, to some extent, alone in their fields. Joni, always highly confident, used the prevailing culture more assiduously than the others, extracted the nourishment she needed, and blossomed into something extraordinary. Kate immediately stood stylistically apart from her contemporaries. Maturing at her own pace, she was much less prolific than Joni and less in thrall to the business. Sandy, while apparently robust, was the most fragile and possibly least in control. Though she made a significant impact upon British music, playing a vital role in defining our version of folk-rock, her growth was ultimately inhibited by poor decisions, emotional vulnerability and by being a pioneering woman in a very male-dominated time and place. She released a lot of music in her short life but her career was rather ad hoc, she never found the perfect conditions to flourish in and was woefully undervalued for some time after her death.

The impulse to publish came to me after downloading something that claimed to be a “complete” guide to Kate Bush, but turned out to be merely a disorderly list of work that has appeared under her name, with no information or comment about any of it. The only thing complete about it was that it was a complete rip off. I only lost a dollar on the deal, but was shocked at how little value there was in that “book” - less than the sketchiest Wikipedia entry - so I was moved to do better. While *this* book doesn’t pretend to be “complete” or definitive, its aim is to it provide a substantial introduction to the lives and works of these three great artists, rounded out with annotated playlists and linked discographies.

I hope newcomers and connoisseurs alike will find something useful here. Please send in corrections, criticism or encouragement and I’ll endeavour to reflect the feedback in any future edition.

Jim Irvin
Hove, England, November 2014

FOREWORD

Spat out of school in 1977, the summer of the Queen's Silver Jubilee, I started working, the week Elvis died, for UBN, a hidden but legal radio station that broadcast exclusively to biscuit factories across Britain from two small studios in Isleworth, West London.

The broadcasters who worked there were a curious crew; the MD was suited, sober and gay, one presenter was outrageously camp on air, another pretended to be outrageously camp off air, one thought he was American, one was a certified surrealist, one called everybody - male or female - “old chap", and one was a creamy-voiced housewife’s choice in camel slacks, sensible shoes and comfy tank-top. UBN was unique at the time; a pop station broadcasting 24 hours a day to a captive audience, with skilled broadcasters emerging from it, so record companies appreciated it as a testing ground for their own new talent.

I was hired as the station's record librarian, but I had a slightly better grasp of pop than my predecessor, an elderly lady named Betty who became vertiginous on the step-stool and kept giving everyone Val Doonican records to play, so within weeks I was producing and presenting a weekly magazine programme - interviewing Chic (where I introduced the then unknown Nile Rogers as Lyle Rogers: "No it's *Nile*, like Egypt and shit!"), The Temptations and The Police - lunching with figures in the industry and, every Tuesday morning, playing through all the new releases, timing their introductions and deciding what we’d be adding to our playlist. For a music-mad 18 year-old this was not a chore.

That October, a record arrived depicting an athletic young woman strapped to a giant kite, its title written in Chinese-styled script. It looked like some ghastly Oriental novelty record. I left it in the new release pile unplayed, but one of the DJs gave it a spin and had an epiphany.

John Hayes was that creamy-voiced broadcaster in camel-coloured Crimplene, sensible shoes and pullovers. Only 10 years older than me, I now realise, at 28 he seemed much older, already avuncular and resolutely unfashionable. He enjoyed music but had no interest in trends or (awful phrase) street-credibility. Each week our presenters were required to pick a Single Of The Week, a prediction for a future hit. Where others would make risky or intriguing selections, John had a habit of picking records that were

certainties, like ELO or Abba, or novelty horrors like Terry Wogan's Floral Dance or Brian and Michael's Matchstick Men and Matchstick Cats and Dogs, He appreciated a nice tune, a reliable groove or something that made him smile or well-up. On that Tuesday, playlist day, I went to the cubby hole where DJs left their nominated Singles Of The Week to find that John had picked the one with the woman on the kite. My heart sank a little as I put it on the turntable to time it.

The piano introduction was arresting. For a few seconds I thought she might be singing in a cod-Chinese accent but was confused by the lyric, was this a ghastly Oriental novelty record set on the Yorkshire moors?! But soon I was hooked, trying to work out what she was saying, why she was singing this way, where she had came from, who she was singing to? By the time the chorus hit and she leaned into the word "Heathcliffe", I was sold. When it was over I had to play it again. John Hayes had felt the same.

“I played it once and it intrigued me,“ he recalled to me shortly before his untimely death in 2010. “I played it a second time and it hit me like a ton of bricks. It was so rare that a record did that, it was so fresh and exciting.”

Within days, everyone on the station agreed, as Kate Bush’s Wuthering Heights’ peculiar allure caught hold. We started playing it on air immediately. Requests soon began arriving from the factory floor. Some were requests to stop playing it. It provoked an unusually passionate reaction. We informed EMI excitedly and requested an interview. They sent us a larger-than-life sized point-of-sale poster of *that* picture from the Gered Mankowitz “leotard session". We repeated out request with a little more urgency. They responded by delaying the single’s release.

The reason was Wings’ wretched Mull Of Kintyre, such a runaway smash that EMI could barely concentrate on any other record over Christmas 1977. Kate’s debut, due to have been out on November 4th, was postponed until January 1978 by which time UBN had been playing it for months. In the realm of the custard cream at least, Kate Bush was already a legend.

As a reward for us, and a dry run for her, John Hayes secured Kate Bush’s first radio interview. She must have been bewildered by the enthusiasm with which she was received in this yeasty-smelling little studio off the Great West Road. She was smaller than I’d imagined, elfin and fine, but luminously beautiful with her cascade of dark hair and startled-fawn

eyes. “The single’s fantastic,” I stammered, and showed her a bundle of requests from people working on the Jammie Dodgers and Penguins. I tried to explain to her how unusual this was. “Wow,” she said, “Amazing.”

It was about all she said throughout her visit. John’s questions weren’t especially incisive and neither were her answers. He asked where she looked for inspiration. “Um, all around me I suppose,” she offered in a girlish whisper. “You’re going to be a big star,” he concluded. “Wow, amazing,” she replied.

At that age, it was one of only a few times I’d been in the presence of someone truly charismatic; whether this emanated from her or was being projected upon her by our fascination, I don’t know. Whatever it was, it soon gripped the nation. Released on January 20th, 1978, Wuthering Heights steadily climbed the charts. *The Kick Inside* came out in February and sailed to Number 3, quite something for a debut album.

Kate was making the kind of impact her hero Elton John took years to achieve. She was making the kind of impact another British singer songwriter, Sandy Denny, would never enjoy. Wuthering Heights finally hit the number 1 spot on March 11th. Incredibly, it was the first time a British woman had written and sung a number 1 single. It stayed there for four weeks.[2] The week after it began its descent, Sandy Denny, who’d released 10 albums, solo or with bands, and been the only woman to appear on a Led Zeppelin album, died in hospital aged just 31, with barely one top 40 hit to her name. Some kind of mantle had been passed. A young woman at the piano with an incredible voice who couldn’t quite find the wider public, gave way to a young woman at the piano with an incredible voice who most certainly could. It's highly unlikely Kate felt such a thing happening herself, but she would acknowledge Sandy among a roll-call of admired, deceased performers on the song Blow Away from her third album, *Never For Ever.*

When that album made it to number 1 it was, again, the first chart topper by a British woman. Kate knew she was unique and resisted media attempts to include her in any lineage, if there was such a thing. She was mildly dismissive of the concept of “singer-songwriters”, some of whom had a tendency, she noted, to sit behind their instrument smiling while singing crushingly sad songs, but she was aware of the high bar set by Joni Mitchell, who sat practically alone in any list of female singers with the instincts of an auteur, and was a rare, female musical influence upon Kate that she actually acknowledged. While Wuthering Heights was waiting to

be released, Mitchell was issuing her most ambitious work to date, the double album *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter*. She had long since left folksy juvenilia behind her, now she was singing complex, densely written songs with their roots in jazz and modern art. Indeed, she was arriving at such a rarefied place she was in danger of leaving her audience behind her, but if Kate wanted to know how to survive in a category for one, Mitchell was providing the only clues.

These three women had a profound effect upon my sense of song, showing how to convey beauty, soulfulness and a writer's integrity. Sandy Denny's was one of the first modern voices I can remember stopping me in my tracks, her performance on Fairport Convention's A Sailor's Life utterly bewitching. I was ten years old. A year or so later, Joni Mitchell's *Blue* described a world I couldn't know, the Californian beau-monde, but I felt some sort of ache as I heard her sing about it. At just 11, I'd no idea what she was on about - it took me a couple of years to realise a "Sunset pig" didn't live in a crepuscular farmyard - but for some reason it spoke to me. Gradually, I realised she was singing about wanderlust and home comforts, the vicissitudes of love, pangs of happiness and security, the instinct to cling to but also repel the people she loved - as she admits in an early song, Urge For Going, covered by several artists and recorded for *Blue* but left off at the last minute, while in Little Green she was sending out a signal to the baby girl she'd given up for adoption, telling her she hadn't been forgotten. *Blue* is a profound recording, an album that bathes you in the sensations of nostalgia, even though it's not your life she's singing about. Joni somehow made a deeply personal, diary-of-its-time recording that's universal and timeless.

I followed her through *For The Roses* and *Court & Spark*, while simultaneously enjoying the less showy, British iteration of atmospheric mastery in Sandy Denny's superb songs for Fairport Convention, especially Who Knows Where The Time Goes, Fotheringay and One More Chance, and her subtle masterpiece, the album *Like An Old Fashioned Waltz.* Finally, just as I reached the age where I could try making my own music, along came Kate, a year older than I and many years more talented, and an inspiration, someone from my generation who had the nerve not to follow the herd.

Just before I'd started working at UBN, I had celebrated leaving school at a party where two records were played again and again, the Sex

Pistols’ God Save The Queen and Do What You Wanna Do by T Connection. One sneered “No future, no future for you and me” and the other encouraged “Do what you wanna do, be your judge and your jury too.” We shouted along to both with matching, passionate enthusiasm. The possibilities of the life ahead seemed boundless and bewildering, and either scenario was equally plausible or fanciful. My curious gig playing pop music in a biscuit factory was a first step into that thrilling uncertainty and the sound made by that girl strapped to a kite will forever be associated with those times and those feelings. Just as Joni and Sandy’s voices had imprinted themselves upon my young life, Kate’s tone, somewhere between a child and a ghost, was a timely affirmation that, though punk satiated adolescent rage and funk fed one’s need to move and feel good, the great singer-songwriters could unlock and define ineffable qualities that transcended those primal urges and base emotions. Kate and Joni and Sandy all sing riddles in otherworldly voices. They arrest your attention and then they take you somewhere. And they helped me decide that something that could do this - alter one's state the way music does - ought to be my life’s work.

SANDY DENNY

Sandy Denny: Flower of the Forest

It's February 1969, on a fair, crisp Sunday afternoon, and a group of young musicians recording their third album together are waiting for their singer to show up. They're in Olympic, a popular eight-track studio housed in an old music hall in Barnes, West London. Last year, the Stones cut *Beggars Banquet* in this room and, just a few months ago, Led Zeppelin were here to record their debut album. Now Fairport Convention are ready to record an English folk song they've been experimenting with, A Sailor's Life.

Ashley ‘Tyger’ Hutchings, founder member of the group, is tuning his bass. Guest fiddler Dave Swarbrick has been here with engineer John Wood since the previous afternoon, testing pick-ups on his violin so he can hear himself above the electric guitars of Richard Thompson and Simon Nicol. They’re set up in a semi-circle flanking boyish drummer Martin Lamble. Out in the control room, next to Wood, sits producer Joe Boyd, an American mogul in London, the man behind Witchseason Productions, which also manages and records The Incredible String Band, John Martyn and Nick Drake. While he’s waiting for everyone to set up, Boyd peruses the baseball pages of a New York Times. The atmosphere in Olympic 1 is relaxed but industrious.

Then Sandy arrives.

Short, full-figured and rosy-cheeked, with a cloud of fine, fair hair tumbling over her shoulders, 22-year-old Sandy Denny resembles the archetypal English farm wench in her peasanty, floral-print smock-dress. Her speaking voice normally hearty, today (and not for the first time) she's seeking sympathy and monopolising attention: she has woken up with a terrible cold and is afraid her voice won't hold out for more than one take, though this doesn't stop her lighting up another Embassy. She clatters into the vocal booth Wood has readied facing the band. Through its glass panels, she can be observed sipping honey and lemon and peeling tissues from a box. She kicks off her shoes and stands at arm's length from the large rectangular, Neuman microphone and clamps on a set of headphones.

This song was her idea, A Sailor’s Life was a traditional air she'd learnt while touring folk clubs as a solo singer. She sang it to the Fairports backstage before a show at Southampton University, and they seized on it as a showcase for the new sound they were developing. They drafted a

seascape from surging cymbals and seagulling guitars, with plenty of space for liquid solos by Richard Thompson, and premiered the song that night. According to Richard it "sent the audience to sleep". But the sound excited the band and they invited Swarbrick down to their next recordings.

And here they are, aware that this epic song won't retain its tension over too many takes. This has to be the one.

Someone counts it off and Simon and Richard sound the first chords, bright and open, strummed like lapping waves. Martin plays splashy rolls on his cymbals, Ashley's bass anchors the intro with a pulsating drone, then moves to a triplet which sketches the pitching of a vessel. Sandy begins to sing: "A sailor's life, it is a merry life/He robs young girls of their hearts' delight/Leaving them behind to weep and moan/They never know when they will return. . ."

Somehow, this young woman from Wimbledon, streaming cold and all, sails from her soundproofed box in the middle of Barnes and harvests history's echoes. Her voice is river-clear, a siren's magnetic music, the lament of Polly on the shore; delicate then robust. It's sultry and sad and deep as the sea. And when it glides away, Richard's guitar breaks over the song like a wave, Swarb's violin evokes a ghostly hornpipe and a lightning bolt. Swaying like a storm-tossed galleon, the performance is a dynamic, unrepeatable tour de force.

When it's over, Boyd and Wood are grinning. Sandy and the band look pleased. Everyone knows they've been present at the birth of something definitive.

She was a suburban, middle-class English girl blessed with a miraculous voice. When she died suddenly in 1978, aged only 31, she'd quietly become one of the finest singers and songwriters this country's ever produced, though few realised as much at the time.

Like many great artists, Sandy Denny overflowed with contradictions. Her late father Neil Denny proudly recalled to me the sweet, sunny-natured daughter who had moved him to tears singing Away In A Manger at a primary school concert and again, years later, singing Wild Mountain Thyme at the Royal Albert Hall. Her close friends, on the other hand, spoke of a raucous woman who swore like a docker, drank like a horse, filled a room with her chatter and caused scenes in Soho nightclubs. She was loved by most who met her, knew her, heard her; yet she often displayed so little confidence in her marvellous talents that those same friends could be worn down by her hunger for reassurance.

Rather than reveal herself, she'd often write coded songs about her friends. They're almost all reflective, downbeat works of great elegance. On stage, their creator was likely to finish one, light up a cheap cigarette, forget which song she was doing next, trip over her second-hand dress, send her drink flying, exclaim "Bugger me, I'm a clumsy cow," and roar with laughter.

It was a wartime romance: Neil and Edna Denny fell in love in Babbacombe, Devon, at the RAF's Number One Training Wing. He was a navigator, she was in postings. They wed in 1942, honeymooning that Christmas. Their son, David, was born in January 1945. Their daughter, Alexandra Elene MacLean Denny, was born on January 6 1947 in Worple Road, Wimbledon. She would forever be known as Sandy.

After demob, Neil became a civil servant. In 1948 he was posted to the Ramsgate office of the Ministry for National Insurance. The family lived near the ocean in Broadstairs for four years until Sandy was about six and this, plus holidays with her maternal relatives in a Welsh seaside village, gave her the love of the sea which would inform so much of her work. After Broadstairs, the family settled inWimbledon, where Neil had been raised after his family had moved to London from Scotland.

Neil and Edna were firm, traditional parents who expected their children to do well at school and encouraged them to play instruments. Sandy was a natural at the piano, able to play pieces from memory and sing beautifully from an early age. Neil Denny loved settling down by the gramophone, and had a large record collection, including traditional songs of his Scottish heritage, the classics, Gilbert and Sullivan, Fats Waller and The Ink Spots. When the '60s arrived, the family kept abreast of pop, though the teenaged Sandy ignored her father's protests about Bob Dylan's "horrible, grating voice". She was fascinated by Dylan's words, thought him a genius even, and was moved to pick up a guitar which had been bought for her brother. Her interest in folk music developed and she began to hang around with musicians in a crowd centred around Kingston School Of Art. She won, and eagerly accepted, a scholarship there, but her parents had more conventional ambitions for their daughter. Edna arranged some nursing work for her at the Brompton Chest Hospital in Fulham before college started.

Sandy loathed it She found caring for the sick to be stressful and came to dread walking through the subterranean corridor that led past the mortuary. Working in a chest hospital didn't stop her smoking, either. "I needed to smoke to steady my nerves," she later recalled. It’s possible she began singing in public at the Prince Of Wales Feathers, a pub in Wimbledon, where fellow Kingston scholar, guitarist John Renbourn,

recalls first meeting her. She showed up at several folk clubs in her nurse's uniform.

She probably sang in some of them as early as 1963, aged 16, but by her own account, her first professional engagement was in the autumn of 1965, at The Barge, a floating folk club moored by the Thames in Richmond. Visiting one night, she came away convinced she could sing better than anyone on the bill. The next week, she plucked up courage and returned with her guitar. "My mouth went dry and I could hardly sing," she recalled years later, "but when I came off and everybody applauded I knew I'd always want to do it."

Stage fright never left her. Nevertheless, she appeared regularly at folk venues like Bunjie's coffee bar, Les Cousins and the John Snow in Soho. Fellow folk-scene debutante Philippa Clare recalls that back then "if you had three chords and long hair you were a folk singer." Although Sandy's repertoire was limited – Dylan, Tom Paxton and Pete Seeger songs plus a few traditional stand-bys concerning trains and hobos - her sparkling voice set her apart from a score of Joan Baez and Julie Felix impersonators.

Soon an agent named Sandy Glennon was booking her for £15 a night. Sandy quit her art course to devote herself to singing. By 1966, she noted later, the folk crowd was becoming jaded and some of the performers set in their ways; but others welcomed the gifted newcomer. American singer-songwriter Jackson C. Frank lived in a South Kensington house with his compatriot Paul Simon and British singer Al Stewart. Frank had a reputation as the intense young beatnik about town. He and Sandy began dating. It was a tough initiation in love. Sandy adored the truculent Frank and his songs - which she began including in her sets - but he was demanding and had an aggressive temperament (he was later treated for schizophrenia). When he started taking hard drugs, the relationship fizzled, but Sandy continued to sing his songs Blues Run The Game and - perhaps aware of the irony - You Never Wanted Me.

This would be one of the first songs she recorded professionally. During a residency at the Deane Arms in South Ruislip, Sandy became better acquainted with one of folk's most famous players, Alex Campbell, who invited her to join him on a session for the BBC World Service show, A Cellarful Of Folk, (where she sang Green Grow The Laurels) and, shortly after her 20th birthday in January 1967, to appear at a recording session which yielded two albums: *Alex Campbell & Friends* and *Sandy & Johnny*,

with the Johnny Silvo Folk Group. You Never Wanted Me, though a little stiff, is sung with great clarity and with an awareness of the latent power of her voice already audible as she attacks the end of each verse. A staple of her early live set, 3.10 To Yuma is a Western ballad she was fond of, Been On The Road So Long was written by Scottish folk luminary Ian Campbell and This Train, serves as a reminder of the kind of song that dominated the folk scene then and shows Sandy still searching for a vocal style to call her own.

What isn’t obvious from these girlish performances is that as she began mixing with more road-hardened players, Sandy was discovering a taste for the folk scene's other favourite pursuit. She was learning to drink.

It was a fine time to be in London. At The Troubadour, a coffee bar at 275 Old Brompton Road (still there today, still dripping with atmosphere), folk's finest would pull up a stool and perform - even Bob Dylan on one occasion. One regular was Dave Cousins, leader of a trio from Twickenham, The Strawbs.

"I dropped in at the singers' night one Tuesday," he remembers. "Suddenly, there was the best voice I'd ever heard." Perched on a stool, sporting a white dress and a white straw hat, and strumming her old Gibson acoustic, was Sandy. Dave introduced himself and, on a whim, asked if she'd join his band. "Much to my astonishment she said yes."

Soon after, Sandy witnessed the newly-formed Pentangle, an ambitious marriage of folk and jazz featuring her friend from college, John Renbourn, folk-scene hero and former fling, Bert Jansch, singer Jacquie McShee and, on double bass, Danny Thompson, sidekick of Tubby Hayes and Ronnie Scott. Sandy, who'd always been a jazz fan, approached Danny after a show at The Horseshoe in Tottenham Court Road and asked if he'd help her with her piano playing. "I said, I'm not a teacher," recalls Danny, implying they both knew perfectly well that's not what she meant. "But I fell for her immediately. She had an amazing chuckle. She was larger than life, a great bird to be with."

Danny lived in Wimbledon too, so duly went round to Worple Road. Sandy's mother wasn't impressed with the Cockney jazzer. "Her mum worked for the local tax office," laughs Danny. "Sandy met me one night and said, Here, my mum's checked up on you and found out you're married with a son! Sandy knew, she didn't care."

Their 18-month affair was all you might imagine between off-duty musicians in '60s London. Danny made good money and drove a Bentley, so they'd travel around the country together whenever their schedules coincided. "She was always up for a laugh, she'd let stuff happen and wouldn't stand for any pomposity, " says Danny. "But she did all the things a singer wasn't supposed to. I used to nag her about the smoking, but I wouldn't have stopped her drinking - we were all big drinkers. I did try and keep her off the brandy. She got aggressive on brandy."

'Sandy on the brandy' became a familiar sight in London's nightspots - at the Speakeasy, Mario, the maitre d', kept a bottle behind the bar for her.

She was a life-force, always dragging her friends out of bed to dance the night away, paying for cabs, sending them off for a good time. "Everyone - men, women, cats and dogs - fell in love with Sandy," declares Linda Thompson (née Peters), who first encountered her in the summer of 1967, when love was in the air and everyone was checking out the emergent 'underground'. Down the UFO Club Sandy got chatting with one of its prime movers, a handsome, 24-year-old Bostonian who'd developed a love for English music: Joe Boyd.

She invited him to see her at Les Cousins. Boyd recalls thinking her performance was at, "the cheesier end of folk." But he couldn't ignore that voice. A few days later, he ran into Sandy with a test-pressing of *Sandy & the Strawbs (*aka *All Our Own Work)* the album she'd recorded in Copenhagen. Joe invited her to his Bayswater flat to hear it. "On stage she'd seemed a bit silly, giggling all the time. Once I'd listened to the record my whole perception of her changed."

Sandy's rendition of Dave Cousins' song, Sail Away To The Sea sounds like the pretty brand of folk favoured by Peter Paul & Mary. Tell Me What You See In Me is a little headier, with its tentative tabla and sitar and attractive harmonies which sound almost West Coast. But it's the recorded debut of Sandy's own songwriting which most likely turned Boyd's head. Who Knows Where The Time Goes is a masterful song. Though Fairport Convention's later reading (on *Unhalfbricking*), slightly re-cast by Richard Thompson for a darker tone, is usually considered definitive, it's already clear in this early version that the song, like its composer's voice, drips with mystery and promise. By the time of *Unhalfbricking*, Sandy was aware how good it was, here she delivers it with a casualness and innocence which has a different kind of poignancy to the later version. It certainly shone enough to attract artists like Judy Collins and Nina Simone who both covered it. Simone called it a "lovely, lovely thing that goes past all conflicts"[3] If nothing else, it was the first example of Sandy's remarkable ability to create a song which felt simultaneously ancient and modern, and sing it in a voice that made the simplest lyric deeply profound.

Boyd saw her in a new light. "She was incredibly funny, with a very quick mind, jumping from one subject to another, dropping in comments obliquely, interrupting herself with footnotes - a chaotic intelligence just poured out." Boyd gave her a lift home to Wimbledon. They ended the evening listening to an illicit broadcast of the yet-to-be-released *Sgt*

Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band which David Denny had copied from Radio Luxembourg. and afterwards began a short romance.

Linda Thompson remembers the social whirl of those days. "I first met Sandy at the Troubadour. She was with Joe Boyd drinking and being jolly. I'd heard about her before: she'd gone out with a guy I was involved with, Paul McNeal, who was a great trad singer - we were touring folk clubs together with Tim Hardin. I was living in a house in Holland Park with my cousin, a model who was going out with Tim Buckley. Then later I started going out with Joe."

The buzz about Sandy was growing. She'd been headlining at The Troubadour since December 1966, covered several times in Melody Maker's folk pages by writer Karl Dallas, had appeared on Alex Campbell's My Kinda Folk TV show and played a major anti-Vietnam benefit in Rotterdam. "She was the best solo female folk singer in the country," recalls singer Marc Ellington. "There were some very good traditional singers like The Watersons; there were a lot of guys writing modern material, but Sandy was the only one who could go from She Moved Through The Fair onto something by Bob Dylan with complete ease and make everything her own."

One might assume it was Joe Boyd who asked Sandy to join Fairport Convention, the young band from Muswell Hill he'd discovered in the Happening 44 strip club and begun managing soon after he and Sandy first met. In fact, Joe was in America when they needed to find a replacement for departing singer Judy Dyble. "We'd heard about Sandy," says Richard Thompson. "and read about her in the Melody Maker, so we asked her along."

The auditions took place in a Fulham boys' club in May 1968. "We saw 10 girls over two days and it was a bit disheartening," says Simon Nicol, still part of Fairport today. "But when Sandy came in, the room got louder and brighter. We were very young and I was aware of being in the presence of someone older and wiser."

"She made us audition for her, to see if she wanted to join us," laughs Richard, just 18 at the time. "We played The Hobo by Tim Buckley and she did You Never Wanted Me. She was incredible. We went into a three second scrum and said, Right she's in! The music suddenly leapt up 100 percent. She was such a classy singer it made the rest of us sound much better."

Within days, the new line-up cut a John Peel session which included Joni Mitchell's song I Don't Know Where I Stand (sung by Judy Dyble on Fairport's self-titled debut album, which was still a month from release). It's a neat example of the group's original San Franciscan psychedelic sound finding another dimension thanks to Sandy's voice, which blends impressively with Ian Matthews ethereal harmony.

At first, Sandy was quite at home on the road, on the stage and in the pub afterwards. Indeed, Boyd has said previously that when he heard she'd joined he was concerned she might be a corrupting influence on his young charges. "She was a more of a hedonist than the rest of us," laughs Simon, "but it would be unfair to call her a corrupting influence." Neil Denny was rather upset by such a suggestion: "Joe Boyd saw something in Sandy which we [her parents] never saw - an effing, blinding, hard-drinking girl. The Fairports were nice enough lads, but scruffy."

During the long hours of travelling, Sandy would sing Scottish ballads she'd learnt from her father, such as Jock Of Hazeldine, The Seal Woman's Croon and Flowers Of The Forest. "According to legend that's really what got them intrigued by British traditional music," says Boyd. Linda

remembers that, initially, Sandy found singing over electric instruments strained her voice, and being in male company all day had its downside. "But she wouldn't put up with the usual shit women put up with, that's for sure," Linda laughs. "She wouldn't let the boys dominate her. And she could be difficult herself. She could really take over. Then the next minute display a total lack of self-confidence."

"Incredibly low self-esteem," confirms Philippa Clare, "and she could be very defensive. One night down The Speakeasy Pete Townshend came up and said, 'You're looking nice,' and her immediate reaction was 'What do you mean!?' She loved Pete, but she never thought people *really* liked her, but that they had some ulterior motive. She was always very difficult if you paid her a compliment."

Marc Ellington: "She could be *very* touchy about her appearance. She'd just look at a plate of cakes and put on weight and she'd either wear jeans that looked like they had the Orson Welles designer label or incredibly old-fashioned '50s dresses. Other days she'd look stunning. She was a mixture of straight-laced schoolteacher and someone who made Janis Joplin look like Mother Teresa, completely out of control. Not within an hour, within the same sentence."

Sandy's first album with Fairport, *What We Did On Our Holidays*, opened with Fotheringay, a song developed from her earliest composition, Boxful Of Treasures, its new lyric inspired by a book about Mary Queen Of Scots. With the lovely, hymnal Book Song, the chiming, creepy Notamun Town, the blues-rocker Mr Lacey, covers of Bob Dylan and Joni Mitchell, She Moves Through The Fair and Richard's stirring song of friendship and discarded dreams, Meet On The Ledge**,** *What We Did On Our Holidays* was a strong record, but clearly the work of a group pulling in several directions.

Singer Ian Matthews wasn't as committed to a folk direction as the others, and left early in 1969. The fans quickly accepted the new quintet, with Sandy singing most of the leads. "You can always tell when you're on a stage with someone with charisma," says Simon Nicol; "the audience are all looking at the same spot."

While rehearsing for the follow-up to *Holidays*, the Fairports would drop by Elektra Records and hang out with Eclection, a pioneering electric-folk band featuring aristocratic Norwegian, George Kajanus (later of Sailor) and a tall, red-headed, deep-voiced Australian, Trevor Lucas. In Britain since 1964, Lucas arrived with a reputation as a ladies' man who, apart from being a musician, was also a master carpenter and excellent chef. Garrulous and ambitious, with interests in music beyond the folk scene, he was also severely dyslexic. Lucas had met Sandy on the folk circuit, and moved into the Gloucester Road house where she rented the attic room. She fell deeply in love with him.

Fairport Convention and Eclection shared a bill at Mothers in Birmingham on May 12, 1969. After the show, Sandy chose to return to London in Trevor's Hillman Hunter. The decision probably saved her life. Fairport's driver fell asleep at the wheel and their Transit van somersaulted off the M1, scattering the band and gear across the motorway.

Linda Thompson: "The night after the accident at four in the morning I met Sandy in an all-night supermarket. She was in a dreadful state saying Martin's dead, and Richard's girlfriend [Jeannie Franklyn] is dead and Tyger's badly injured. She would have been sitting next to Richard if she hadn't gone home with Trevor."

Joe Boyd compiled *Unhalfbricking* from the songs completed before the crash, among them Autopsy, one of Sandy's most arcane but compelling songs, set by Richard to an arrangement in 5/8 and the rollicking Cajun Woman**,** a Thompson tune that gave Sandy a chance to rock’n’roll, something she enjoyed, even though it was a mode which seldom showed her at her best.

After Martin's funeral and Ashley's discharge from hospital, the band met to discuss their future. Still bewildered by the tragedy – a state which most of them wouldn’t leave behind for several years – they decided that, while they weren’t going to split, a new direction should be pursued. By the time that Si Tu Dois Partir - a Cajun-flavoured version of Dylan's If You Gotta Go, Go Now, worked up backstage at the Middle Earth club and translated into French at Sandy's suggestion - became a surprise Top 30 hit in July 1969, Fairport were beginning to see their future take shape.

"A few months before the accident, *Music From Big Pink* by The Band hit London," recalls Joe. "Fairport effectively said, ‘We want to create something as English as this is American.’ So much of what they'd done up until then was American in style. *Music From Big Pink* kind of said, 'Forget it, you're not American, you're never even gonna come close to this music.' At the same time it was inspiring a real feeling for roots: forget all that middle-class surface stuff. This is the Arkansas earth speaking. . . So what about the Lincolnshire earth?"

With Swarbrick now full-time on electric violin, they gathered at a house near Winchester. "I was dumfounded by all of them," recalls the new drummer Dave Mattacks, who'd previously played in dance bands. "I'd never met people like this. They were all very bright and their priorities were different from musicians I'd played with up to that time. Sandy had the most amazing voice. I'd not heard singing that good before."

The album that grew out of their search for British roots, *Liege & Lief*, was warmly welcomed. The shivery Reynardine continued the hypnotic feel of A Sailor’s Life, Thompson’s elegiac Farewell Farewell - written for Martin and Jeanie – inspired one of Sandy’s most tender performances, and Tam Lin one of her most rousing. *Liege & Lief* remains Fairport's best-seller and has never been out of print. Critics hosannahed, America beckoned, a world tour was arranged.

At which point, Sandy left the band.

As Fairport prepared to fly to Copenhagen for a TV show, Sandy announced she wouldn’t go as she was afraid to fly. The band didn't take her seriously, but she failed to turn up at the airport the next morning. David Sandison, Island's Head of Press at the time, remembers Witchseason's Anthea Joseph taking it upon herself to get Sandy to Denmark. "She did a bit of detective work and finally tracked Sandy down, very drunk and belligerent, sobered her up and frog-marched her onto the next flight. Of course, as soon as she got on the plane Sandy just clicked her fingers and ordered more booze. When they arrived, Sandy was completely drunk again. She could be very selfish."

"We felt let down," says Richard. "But I remember at the airport in Copenhagen saying, 'Well, perhaps this is for the best. Aren't girls temperamental? Let's have a lads' band.' Something like that. It was Sandy's choice. She wanted to spend more time with Trevor."

The couple had set up home in Chipstead Street, Fulham. They bought an Airedale and named him Watson. "After the accident, she'd become more domestic, more comfortable," confirms Joe. "Now the record was out, everybody loved it, all the offers from America were coming in. She looked at it all with new eyes and wasn't sure that was what she really wanted." She fretted about Trevor's fidelity, certain that he slept with other women on tour. "She could see a situation developing where she'd spend the next year touring and lose her relationship with Trevor," says Joe. "For the first time in her life she had a settled relationship and she didn't want to give it up."

She also continued to be spooked by Fairport's road accident. It made her consider options beyond rock music, a trade still rare among young British women at the time. Another factor in her departure may have been the arrival of Swarbrick. He and Sandy were both natural dominators of the group dynamic. They had a deep respect for one another but it may have been one big personality too many.

"I keep wanting to reveal incredible dramas about the split," Sandy told Disc & Music Echo after both she and Ashley Hutchings had finally quit the band, "but I really don't have the energy to make anything up. I didn't think I could sing particularly when I joined them and they in turn were incredibly unenthusiastic about everything - at least that was the impression they gave to me." This was obviously self-deceiving nonsense.

"It was very tricky for her to settle into the discipline of working with other people," decides Marc Ellington, who invited Sandy to sing on his own albums. "But she found it very difficult to stand up on her own and was reluctant to go solo. She liked the camaraderie and power of a band and not having to take care of herself."

Sandy's solution was to form a group with Trevor. The benefits were manifold. The music would be on her terms, she'd have the support of a full band and Trevor where she could keep an eye on him. They gathered former Eclection drummer Gerry Conway, bass player Pat Donaldson and guitarist Jerry Donahue from Poet And The One Man Band. For a few days they were called Tiger's Eye. Then they became Fotheringay.

"I'll never go solo again," Sandy told Disc gleefully in September 1970. "I'm too happy with bunches of people."

"It was pretty much Sandy's show," says Donahue, "but she encouraged all of us. It was the closest I've ever come in music to a family." Fotheringay was so harmonious, Donahue can only recall one argument -

between Sandy and Gerry Conway, about a cheese sandwich. Donahue also realised something that Sandy couldn't always see: "To Trevor she was the greatest thing ever. He thought she was very, very special."

In the 1970 Melody Maker Poll, Sandy took the rosette for Best Female Singer, and soon afterwards she recorded, unpaid, the performance most rock fans know her by, Battle Of Evermore, a duet with Robert Plant on *Led Zeppelin IV*.

"I didn't realise until I'd nearly finished all the lyrics that it needed to be a call and response thing," says Plant, "so I approached Sandy, my favourite singer out of all the British girls that ever were, and she was up for it. I don't think it took more than 45 minutes. I showed her how to do the long 'Oooooh, dance in the dark' so there'd be a vocal tail-in. It was perfect against my bluesy thing. She and I got the Melody Maker awards that year, two singers from groups that never got on the radio!"

"I left the studio feeling slightly hoarse," Sandy told student journalist Barb Charone in 1973. "Having someone out-sing you is a horrible feeling, wanting to be strongest yourself."

But while things were looking up for Sandy, others were unhappy about Fotheringay. Joe Boyd had had long discussions with her about going solo after Fairport, and had even secured a $40,000 advance from A&M in America for her next record. He was irked to see the money, which could have given her some security, being frittered away on the band. He was also upset that his vision of a Sandy solo album that fully explored the creative chemistry between her and Richard Thompson was not to be.

Some fans thought Fotheringay a step sideways, too. The album was well received, chiefly for Sandy's otherworldly singing on pellucid beauties like Banks Of The Nile, The Sea and her tribute to reclusive singer Anne Briggs, The Pond And The Stream (noticing a pattern?). But the response to their first shows was muted, and a showcase at the Royal Albert Hall disastrous when they were blown offstage by support act, Elton John.

Sandy found the responsibility of being the main attraction a strain. "That generation of female singers had it a lot harder than they do today," notes Boyd. "There's no hesitation now about assertively being a star, with management and planning. There was a lot of conflict about being a woman in that role then, and the more successful you become, the more you leave people behind, so the more you run the risk of being on your own. Sandy

was afraid of being a big success. A lot of female performers from that generation had that fear."

Fotheringay's demise in New Year 1971 arose around a misunderstanding between Sandy and Joe. With Witchseason in financial difficulties and its artists changing and moving on, Boyd accepted an offer to sell the company and take up a new post in the US. "Most of the groups seemed philosophical about it," he says. "Sandy and Nick Drake were the most upset. Sandy was freaked out. Complicating matters, I was involved with Linda, so Sandy was like, 'How could you go and leave Linda behind?' - that whole subtext."

One evening, in a Chelsea pub after a fruitless session for the putative second Fotheringay album, Sandy said "Maybe you're right, Joe. Maybe I should do a solo album. Would you produce it.?" Boyd replied that had she asked two months before, maybe he wouldn't have gone to America. Sandy, who sometimes fell foul of her gullibility, appeared to take this comment aa a deal and, without consulting Boyd further, promptly broke up the group to make him stay: there, I'm solo. The band was shocked. Donaldson and Conway immediately got work with Cat Stevens, and by the time Boyd realised what had happened it was too late for Fotheringay to regroup.

This curious episode clouded Joe and Sandy's relationship for the rest of her life. Sandy often expressed a wish that Fotheringay had continued. "We got back to being friends later but I never worked with her again," says Boyd regretfully. "I went to America and Richard produced her solo record. It was good, but not as transcendentally wonderful a collaboration as I imagined. I was never really close to her after that night."

"It was typical Sandy really," says Thompson of the sessions for her first solo record, with most of Fotheringay playing on them. "She just wanted to go in the studio and feel comfortable. There wasn't any producer; we just started doing stuff." Sandy's writing tended towards slow or mid-paced songs which she liked to contrast with covers. While these expressed a side of her that her own material ignored, her voice sounds miscast on Let's Jump The Broomstick; and a ragged rendition of Dylan's Down In The Flood with Richard singing the lead comes across like an out-take from *Unhalfbricking*.

"It was all a bit of a muddle," Thompson admits. Fittingly, the album's working title was *Slapstick Tragedies*, but it became *The North Star Grassmen And The Raven*s; its cover depicting Sandy in an apothecary's workshop, not a package which exactly screamed to a wider audience. Despite several gems - Late November, John The Gun and the superbly chilling Next Time Around (supposedly written for Jackson C. Frank), the album’s haphazard feel wasn’t what was required to capitalise on momentum generated by the poll wins and *Led Zeppelin IV*.

"In the studio she could be lackadaisical," remarks Richard. "She'd do anything she could to avoid recording. Talk mostly. She'd give really half-hearted performances and then come along to the mix and say, 'That's a terrible vocal', and John [Wood] or someone would say, 'Well fix it', and because it was the last chance, she'd do a good one. Always postponing the real performance until the absolute eleventh hour."

"She had a lot of problems with self-confidence," adds Wood. "More than once she'd be doing an overdub, couldn't get it right and would completely go to pieces and run out of the room."

Harbouring ambitions as a producer, Trevor saw Joni Mitchell, Carole King and Carly Simon selling millions and thought Sandy could too. David Denny, who'd been living with the couple in Chipstead Street, gave up his job in civil engineering and became Sandy's manager, striking a deal with Island that enabled Trevor to produce her next album.

Right from the opening track, It'll Take A Long Time, the result - accessibly titled *Sandy* - was more focused than its predecessor. Though still broadly in a folk mode, Trevor modernised the sound and the playing was steadier. Listen Listen (included here in a French translation, Ecoute,

Ecoute) and The Lady were among Sandy's strongest works, her acapella setting of Richard Farina's poem The Quiet Joys Of Brotherhood was spellbinding, her multi-tracked voice at its most effulgent and supernatural.

For many fans, *Sandy* was her best work ever. With a glamorous sleeve portrait by David Bailey ("God, that was worth a three day flap," laughs one friend), it had the potential to be a hit. But, despite favourable reviews, reasonable promotion and Tony Blackburn improbably making Listen Listen his single of the week on Radio 1, *Sandy* struggled to sell.

She began to despair of ever finding her niche. Yet her work was attracting some influential fans. Dylan had enjoyed the Fairport versions of his songs. Frank Zappa was an unlikely champion (Frank and Sandy apparently had a fling during one of his London visits), Mama Cass loved her, Lowell George wanted to work with her. The Eagles, particularly Don Henley, were great enthusiasts. Lou Reisner and Pete Townshend cast her as the nurse in their lavish reworking of *Tommy* (her only gold record).

As she was finishing *Sandy*, Fairport Convention was falling apart. To save it, Dave Swarbrick and Dave Pegg asked Trevor to join them. He took along Jerry Donahue and yet another revamped Fairport embarked on a world tour.

Forced to go it alone while her husband went off with her old band, Sandy wrote the best songs of her career and unveiled them in America in the spring of 1973. She took an entourage of two: her brother David in his role as manager, and her chum Miranda Ward (the first female presenter on Radio 1), invited along as assistant, moral support and social lubricant. In New York she opened for Genesis at the enormous Philharmonic Hall. In Boston and Denver she supported Randy Newman. Rumours of her rejoining Fairport began to filter back to the UK when they appeared together at the LA Troubadour. Sandy admitted later that she felt "a sudden sense of relief" when they started playing behind her.

Work on her finest album also began in LA, at A&M studios. *Like An Old Fashioned Waltz* is, like Joni Mitchell's *Blue* a record infused with and about nostalgia, a window onto your past. In the stirring opener, Solo, Sandy bemoans the lot of the lone performer - using it as a metaphor for the isolation of every human - but also mocking the singer's self-delusion: "I've always lived in a mansion on the other side of the moon. I've always kept a unicorn and I never sing out of tune. . .I can't communicate with you and I guess I never will. We've all gone solo." Dark The Night, Carnival and At

The End Of The Day summon, respectively, the dull ache of solitude, the extruded pang of departure, and a yearning to be reunited with a lover at home. The acerbic Friends tells an old pal to get lost, (apparently inspired by Pete Townshend rejecting her advances one night when they were both the worse for brandy). Like An Old Fashioned Waltz itself simply lays out the trappings of romantic reminiscence: flowers, long-ago summers and ghostly music. The album's pinnacle, however, is No End, the final song, whose narrator pays a mid-winter visit to an old friend, a painter who has given up their vocation. The snowy setting, the way the story gradually unfurls and the conversational lyric make it as rich and resonant as a good one act play. Sandy sings it with breathtaking poise, her phrasing inimitable.

The album was cautiously received. It was her first without any folk content, yet it was barely a rock album. Though the lavish but skilfully judged production by Trevor and John Wood was applauded, the two jaunty covers drawn from Neil Denny's record collection - The Ink Spots' Whispering Grass and Fats Waller's Until The Real Thing Comes Along - unseated the intense mood conjured by her own songs and bemused some listeners; others felt that Harry Robinson's romantic orchestrations – referred to by Sandy as the songs' "fur coats" - were an unnecessary coating of syrup.

But Sandy was justly proud of it, and in anticipation of its October release, played the shows of her life, most notably an appearance at the Howff, a tiny venue in Primrose Hill, on September 4, 1973. The performance was ecstatically received, and not just by the music press. The Daily Telegraph, a publication not known for hyperbole, declared: "It was one of those happenings that critics dream of but rarely experience, when a good but hitherto erratic singer suddenly takes off, carrying her audience with her on the kind of trip that singing is really all about. It was, in fact, Sandy Denny's moment of truth. . .In some of her songs tonight, particularly Solo and No End, talent became genius and there were glimpses of depths which few other singers have revealed to us."

Unfortunately, Island didn't release the album until the following summer.

Sandy and Trevor finally jumped the broomstick on September 20, 1973. Sandy found a wedding dress in a flea market. Trevor went out the day before to buy a ring, only to be foiled by Wednesday half-day closing, so Miranda lent him one she'd been given by Ginger Baker. Meanwhile,

Sandy called her old beau Danny Thompson, asked him to improvise as best man and invited him on ’the honeymoon’, a Fairport TV appearance in Plymouth, a night in a Holiday Inn and uproariously boozy train ride at either end. Sandy’s mother made an appearance at the Fulham registry office but her father, no fan of Trevor’s, refused to attend.

January 26, 1974: the first rock act to play Sydney Opera House was Fairport Convention, and Sandy was back in the fold. As long as Trevor stayed with them and Sandy wanted to be with him, it seemed inevitable. But the ambitious world tour, which included their first Japanese visit, was financially ruinous. The band returned to the UK despondent and practically bankrupt, and dismissed their manager. David Denny took over temporarily and a live album was rushed out to help the cash flow. In the meantime, Sandy and Trevor moved to the heart of the country.

The Northamptonshire village of Cropredy had no idea what had hit it when Dave Swarbrick and his Chinese wife Gloria moved in. The takings at The Red Lion went up for a start. Swarb's friends and colleagues flocked to visit and liked it so much they all made plans to live in the area. Mr and Mrs Trevor Lucas bought a house in a neighbouring village called Byfield, and Dave and Christine Pegg moved into Cropredy shortly afterwards. It would never be quite the same again.

Trevor and Sandy soon became the talk of Byfield. He'd swan through the village in his orange and lime green Beetle; she'd weave to and from Cropredy's pubs in her automatic Rover, usually with Watson the Airedale in the back. The locals learnt to give her a wide berth. She could often be found trying to extricate the car from a ditch. Some close friends have suggested that Sandy was functionally allergic to alcohol, noting that it didn't take many drinks to make her very drunk but she'd carry on anyway. If that's so, she was certainly poisoning herself with drink.

With most of the band and its associates based nearby, Fairport Convention could party together both on tour and off, gin and spliff the intoxicants of choice. There was apparently even a period when Fairport Convention discovered amyl nitrate. Merrie England indeed.

"I had two small children at the time and thought I was insane and everybody else was normal," recalls Christine Pegg of this almost desperate conviviality. "It was only later I realised that I was the sane one and they were all off their heads. Swarb and Sandy had a lot of flare-ups - they were very similar in many ways. Trevor loved them both and was caught in the middle. And Trevor and Sandy were very fiery together too. Trevor acted as a buffer zone between Sandy and the outside world. She had an incredible imagination and lived in a slightly different world to the rest of us."

Their relationship became increasingly open. While not publicly acknowledging tolerance of extramarital affairs, Trevor and Sandy each turned a blind but disapproving eye toward dalliances, which they both indulged in. Even on tour, one of them might pick up a companion for a few days. "They both had a self-destruct button and seemed to do things just for the hell of it, knowing perfectly well it wasn't going to work out," says Chris Pegg. There were also one or two screaming matches backstage before gigs, after which Trevor and Sandy would go on wearing fixed smiles. They remained devoted, but damage was being done that would eventually prove disastrous.

In the midst of this turmoil, Fairport made an album. It felt like make or break time. They needed a record that would lift them out of the mire. At Chris Blackwell's suggestion they hired Glyn Johns, acclaimed producer of the Stones, Who and Eagles, well-known for his disciplined approach in the studio. *Rising For The Moon* was cut in two sessions sandwiching another American tour. When they returned, Dave Mattacks left the band, partly through dislike of Johns' manner, but mostly in dismay at the band's eternal financial struggle. "These were the early days of the realisation that this music was never going to be big, that it would always remain a minority thing," he says. (Roadie Paul Warren filled the drum breach for a European tour then former Grease Band drummer Bruce Rowland arrived as a permanent replacement.) Dave Pegg: "I thought, We've got no finished songs, no drummer and nobody's talking to each other! We're finished! Within a week it was done. Glyn Johns was a genius. It was a miracle album."

Miraculous but patchy. Swarb's pretty waltz for Sandy, White Dress, made an unlikely single and Sandy's own Rising For the Moon showcased an apparent communal sense of purpose. Other contributions, Iron Lion and Night Time Girl, were positively flimsy. But the closing song was a Denny masterpiece; One More Chance, a moving rallying call to peace, woven into some of the most stirring instrumental work Fairport had ever recorded and sung in a tone that was new to Sandy, mature and powerful but perceptibly fragile. "Is it too late to change the way we're bound to go? Is it too late? There's surely one of us must know."

Sandy never changed the way she was bound to go. Though her work kept improving, her career refused to lift off. She felt pressurised whatever she did: forming a band or going solo. Her marriage felt lopsided: she told friends that she needed Trevor more than he needed her, then sometimes she wondered if he was just using her to further his own career. She could never relax. Feeling settled was one of her prime goals, yet her mind was too sharp to keep still.

When *Rising For The Moon* was not the hit that Fairport needed, Island finally dropped them. Jerry Donahue decided to leave the band and Trevor and Sandy followed. In the winter of '75/'76 she wrote the material for another solo album, *Rendezvous*, which was recorded the following Spring.

"It was a difficult record to make," confirms John Wood. "She'd started having these very black moods. She wouldn't turn up, or she'd turn up very late. Trevor would be trying to cajole her into doing things that she wasn't so keen on. She was not in control of herself. It took a long time for material to come together and her mood swings became much greater. Halfway through the album, she turned up [at my house] at two o'clock in the morning, virtually battering the door down, drunk and in a complete state of nervous exhaustion, feeling totally unloved and unwanted."

Sandy's life was a mess. She turned, for a short time, to Scientology, until Trevor found out and went ballistic, retrieving the money she'd spent joining up. Yet Trevor was increasingly absent - "Trevor with *her*", Sandy's diaries noted - and Sandy herself embarked on a brief but intense affair with former Fotheringay player Pat Donaldson. A visit to America passed in a blizzard of high-grade cocaine. And her drinking wasn't diminishing. Recovery from binges took longer, her aversion to travel worsened, as did her moods.

"Nowadays people would see the signs, see the mood swings and cart her off to rehab," says Linda Thompson. "But in those days you didn't do that. She couldn't talk to anyone about it. She had to tough it out on her own."

Instead, she became pregnant. She declared she was delighted. But there was a rare moment of harmony between Trevor and his in-laws when all of them questioned Sandy's motives for having the baby. They were right to be concerned.

“She actually asked me, ’Do you think cocaine will harm the baby?’” says Linda, shaking her head.

On *Rendezvous*, the damage she was doing to herself was audible. For the first time some notes seemed hard-won. The material was the usual mixed bag, stunning tracks like One Way Donkey Ride and I'm A Dreamer (a superb, one-take performance), offset by a pointless last-minute cover of Candle In The Wind and a bizarre cover of country staple Silver Threads And Golden Needles played achingly slow with accompaniment from a silver band. However, No More Sad Refrains declared that Sandy intended to move away from her stock-in-trade. "I always write on my own," she told one reporter. "Do you know how I feel when I've written a sad song? Something that's really hit me and hurt me? I feel terrible. It really upsets me. Why do I have to put myself through it? Why can't I try and relax a little bit more? I'm not really interested any more in being heavy with people. There's no point, I've just realised, because what can I do? If I can't do anything about the way things are, then surely I can try to make people feel a bit better about it.. . .It's taken me since last summer to get back some sanity, something I didn't even realise I'd lost."

As her album appeared, Sandy returned to the studio in May 1977, to cut a version of Bryn Haworth’s Moments - a chillingly reflective, backward-glancing choice of song, even if she didn’t know it was to be her last recording.

With its orchestra, choir and silver band, *Rendezvous* sounded fusty in the summer of the Sex Pistols and Chic. It was a tricky time for established musicians, with many traditional channels suddenly closing up. As the industry shifted on its access, money was becoming tight for all the Fairport clan. Sandy and Trevor discussed relocating to America. But their baby arrived two months early. Georgia Rose Lucas, born on July 12 1977, weighed barely two pounds. Thankfully, the John Radcliffe Hospital in nearby Oxford was a renowned centre for premature baby care. Georgia remained there for some weeks.

Rendezvous and a single of Candle In The Wind both sold dismally. Island founder Chris Blackwell finally admitted, in the autumn of 1977, that he could no longer justify the money he was spending on Sandy and her contract was not renewed. Somehow, in November, she managed a short string of dates, possibly to attract label interest, but it didn’t work. Some shows played to disappointing audiences but the last, at The Sound Circus

in the Royalty Theatre, London, was well-attended, though friends were shocked to see Sandy drained, blotchy and suddenly aged, crippled with stage-fright and steaming drunk. The voice was huskier than before, but, on tape at least, the performance sounds excellent.

Their careers in the doldrums and with two new mouths to feed (Trevor had bought a puppy to keep Watson company), Trevor and Sandy's fights began to escalate; which, in turn, made Sandy more prone to boozing her troubles away, which made her belligerent and unreliable, which made it increasingly hard for friends to help It was a cruel spiral. Some say Sandy thought motherhood would provide her with focus and a panacea for her troubles. Instead, she was hit by a mood that has all the hallmarks of post-natal depression. Trevor became increasingly concerned about whether Sandy was fit to be left alone with Georgia. "The villagers were worried about what was going on," says Chris Pegg. "While Trevor was away, she would leave the baby outside the pub. People would call us and say, 'There's an orange Beetle with a screaming child inside.' We'd go and try and get Georgia and Watson wouldn't let us in. It sounds terrible, but she wasn't neglecting Georgia any more than she neglected herself. She just wasn't the most responsible person…And she was always falling down stairs. If there were three stairs in a row she'd fall down them."

When Sandy pranged the car with Georgia on board, Trevor's mind was made up. He began to plan a move. He tidied his affairs, sold the Beetle and bought a one-way ticket to Australia. He intended to return to his parents, whom he could trust to look after Georgia (still only nine months old) while he prepared a new life for himself. He told few of his plan or destination except Philippa Clare and Fairport's drummer Bruce Rowland, whom he swore to secrecy.

On the morning of Thursday, April 13, 1978, Trevor put Georgia in her carry-cot and told Sandy he was going to visit his sister in London. At 5pm that evening, Sandy called Miranda to see if he'd shown up in Barnes, as they'd often visit when they were in town. Miranda said no, but asked if there was any message if he did appear. "I've got his supper in the oven," said Sandy breezily. "I'll see him when I see him." At around 9pm, Miranda's phone rang again. It was Trevor in a call box. He told her he was leaving Sandy, taking Georgia with him, but didn't say where he was going.

Miranda decided to drive to Byfield. Sandy rang again before midnight. She'd noticed that some of Trevor's clothes were missing.

Miranda broke the news to her and said she'd come and fetch her. Sandy took it surprisingly well. "She was very stoical and strong;" remembers Miranda, "She wasn't going to get hysterical, though she was convinced I knew where Trevor was. I was the one who was getting hysterical. After she'd gone to bed I was frantically ringing people asking where he'd gone. They were all denying that they knew anything."

The following morning Sandy began to complain of headaches. Miranda made an appointment for late Monday afternoon with her GP. They also decided Sandy should talk to him about her problems with drink. Over the weekend, the two friends had several long conversations reminiscing and talking about the future, who Sandy might work with, and so on. Miranda continued trying to track Trevor down. Sandy was adamant that she wouldn't beg him to return. On Sunday she had a long phone conversation with her brother. She went to bed in the early hours in an optimistic mood.

At 6am she awoke with a terrible headache. She went to Miranda's room and asked her for a painkiller.

When Miranda left for work on Monday morning, Sandy was asleep. She left her a long note with the school's phone numbers, contacts for friends if she needed to talk to anyone and assured her she'd be back in time for the doctor's appointment. At 1.30pm Steven Walker, a friend who was taking care of Sandy's dogs in Byfield, called the house and spoke to her. He said later that she sounded less upbeat than usual but otherwise seemed fine.

At about 2.30pm, a young musician named Jon Cole left his flat in Barnes, climbed into his Datsun Cherry and set off for Hammersmith where his band, The Movies, were rehearsing. The previous evening, Miranda had given him a spare key and asked if he would look in on Sandy during the day. But Jon couldn't be bothered; he was already late for his rehearsal.

Then something changed his mind.

As his car drew level with the bus stop outside 93 Castlenau, he heard a woman's voice whisper a single word in his ear: "Help."

He wasn't a man prone to hearing voices - and he hasn't heard any since - so he paid attention to the command in his head, pulled into the drive and opened the door to Miranda's flat. Sandy was upstairs on the landing. She was dressed in bell-bottomed jeans and a pink mohair sweater. She was

stretched out on her side, feet touching the bottom of the stairs, which curved up to the next floor. She was motionless.

Jon checked her breathing. She was alive. He called for an ambulance and was told it would be there in five minutes. In the meantime, he went into the kitchen to make some tea. He felt sure she would be fine, that perhaps she'd just fallen and knocked herself out. He even called to her from the kitchen.

"Do you want a cup of tea, Sandy?"

At around 3pm Miranda was telephoned at school and told that Sandy had collapsed and been taken to Queen Mary's Hospital in Roehampton. She was in a coma.

A brain haemorrhage was diagnosed. Sandy was on a life support machine. The prognosis was not good. Miranda broke the news to Neil and Edna in Cornwall and they came to stay with her. David flew back from America. Sandy's friends began to gather. Miranda finally found a number for Trevor's parents in Australia and called him, but it took a call from Bruce Rowland to persuade him to fly back immediately. He left Georgia with his parents.

On Wednesday, Sandy was transferred to the brain injury unit at Atkinson Morley hospital for an operation. It wasn't a success. Linda Thompson visited and saw Sandy wrapped in foil blankets to prevent hypothermia, but was surprised to see how well she looked otherwise. But there was no hope. The family were informed that nothing further could be done and Trevor's permission was sought to switch off the life-support machine. It was scheduled for 8pm on Friday 21st April, but Sandy passed away in her sleep ten minutes beforehand. The death certificate cited "mid-brain trauma". There were no reports of significant levels of drugs or alcohol in her body. It was a tragically mundane end to a special life.

Sandy was buried in Putney Vale Cemetery. A lone piper played Flowers Of The Forest as she was lowered into the ground.

Trevor was ostracised when he returned to Byfield to clear the house. The Dennys could not forgive him for, in their minds, abandoning Sandy. The Fairports were torn: they'd loved both Sandy and Trevor and understood that it wasn't a black and white story. "We all felt incredibly guilty," Chris Pegg admits. "Deep down we knew it had all been going wrong, we knew Trevor was thinking of going, but [with those two] we'd got into the habit of keeping our heads down while the storm passed and

then it would be OK - and this time it wasn't. Everybody in our circle felt that we should have been there, but it was just another storm as far as we knew."

In late March, Sandy had visited her parents and taken Georgia to see them. She had been drinking to steel herself for the visit. She fell down the stairs there and hit her head badly on the stone floor. Sandy told friends later that her mother had refused to take her to hospital because she was more concerned about the impropriety of being seen with a drunken daughter than Sandy's head wound. Dave Swarbrick remembers seeing a huge cut on Sandy's head at his birthday party on April 5th. Some think this untreated fall was the cause of the final collapse. For her headaches, Sandy's doctor had prescribed distalgesic, a powerful painkiller which, when mixed with alcohol has been known to cause brain haemorrhage. None of this came out at the inquest into Sandy's demise. The verdict was accidental death.

Sandy’s passing changed things. “It was like some reference point was gone,” says singer and friend Maddy Prior, “and you could never again achieve certain things because of that.” Fairport fell apart. Dave Swarbrick exiled himself to Scotland for a while. Miranda, feeling hounded by accusations levelled at her by Sandy's circle, suffered a nervous breakdown and moved to the West Country where she still lives and teaches. Trevor married Elizabeth Hurtt, a former tenant of Philippa Clare's. The couple moved to Australia to bring up Georgia and their own son Clancy, who was born some years later. David Denny died in a road accident in Denver, Colorado in 1980. Having lost both her children, Edna Denny died broken-hearted in April 1981. Trevor died of heart failure in 1989.

Neil Denny died in 1999. I visited him in 1997, when he was 85, living alone in a tiny maisonette in Hampton. I didn’t fully understand until afterwards, when I’d spoken to others, that Neil was in denial about his daughter’s true nature, and also, to some extent, her brilliance. He was obviously having trouble understanding his grand-daughter, Georgia, too - a young woman expressing a desire to become a DJ, impatient to go clubbing all night when she came to visit him. He shook his head with incomprehension, bemused by the new world and the circumstances that had led to him outliving his wife, son and daughter and seeing the family line continue on the other side of the planet. (Great grand-daughters Ariel and Jahmira had been born in Australia a few months earlier.) I asked him how he'd coped over the years.

"You put on a sort of act," he said, staring out of the window. Then, to himself: "Why am I still here and all those good people are gone?"

Resting on the floor beside his armchair was a gilt-framed photograph. A curly-headed, slightly startled toddler looked out into the room. She was cradling a doll's cot in her arms. It was Sandy, with so much time still to come and go.

Sandy Denny: A chronological playlist

Fotheringay

(from *What We Did On Our Holidays)*
Before defining British folk-rock, Fairport operated more like a local Jefferson Airplane, but in that period they created this haunting, history-heavy version of an early Denny gem. Richard's lyrical guitar, Iain's plainsong-like backing vocal and the flecks of pipe organ support a particularly ethereal performance by Sandy, delicate as moorland mist.

Who Knows Where The Time Goes

(from *Unhalfbricking)*
Here's the kind of song Sandy saw as her calling. Like Joni's later *Blue*, it focuses a young woman's sense of the enormity of life through the personal lens of longing for a lover lost, gone or yet to be. She sings it in a clear, clean, almost offhand way, all the more affecting for not being overwrought.

Autopsy

(from *Unhalfbricking*)
A curious song, made odder by Richard Thompson arranging its first section in 5/4. Sandy's voice is vaguely haughty, the words arcane, the structure strange, but its a song to keep returning to. Why 'autopsy'? Perhaps it's about trying to fathom how a relationship died, hence the "red around the eyes" in the verse, the second section acting as consoling advice to "remember you are free".

A Sailor's Life

(from *Unhalfbricking*)
Here's Sandy blithely walking into a world - folk-rock - she'll never completely leave, using the clarity of her delivery to summon the past in all its ambivalent glory. The way folksong takes tragedy for granted somehow suits her well. The band is at its electrifying best and conjures so much

impressionistic detail you'd swear you were seeing bustling harbours, heaving ships and seagulls circling overhead.

Matty Groves

(from *Liege & Lief*)
Lord Donald's wife seduces a young serf with murderous results. Sandy teases out a slight twang in her voice to suit this old English ballad given a dramatic new weight with an electric arrangement.

The Sea

(from *Fotheringay*)
The sea is a much used image in Sandy's work, something she attributed to her early years living near the ocean in Broadstairs. Feeling like Joni Mitchell's songs of the period, this is Sandy demonstrating that, despite the name of her new band and their album's cover art, she doesn't consider herself foremost an interpreter of trad.arr material. Jerry Donahue's crystalline guitar solo seems to echo Sandy's vocal tone.

Banks Of The Nile

(from *Fotheringay*)
Fotheringay's equivalent of A Sailors Life. Another folk ballad reimagined for electric instruments - albeit in a quiet, suggestive setting - another utterly transfixing vocal performance. The rolling riff glides on like the Nile itself, the beautiful melody brings out the yearning in Sandy's voice, as she watches her man go off to war, and there's an inescapable tension. You want the song to erupt but it never does, simply fades into the distance like a column of marching men.

Late November

(from *El Pea* - available on expanded edition of *The North Star Grassman and the Ravens*)
The stirring opening track of her debut album first appeared in a substantially different mix on an Island sampler album, selected here for

indulgent reasons, as this was the first solo Sandy track I recall hearing and I grew to love the way its messy sound obscured the song's mysterious core. Richard Thompson's *laissez-faire* production allowed the band to let rip. The album version tidied it all up a bit and used a different lead vocal, but this one still wins to my ears.

Next Time Around

(from *The North Star Grassman and the Ravens*)
One of her most evocative chord sequences on piano, a velvet vocal, and a deft use of strings. Lyrically, it's another of her enigmas wrapped in a riddle, but is generally thought to be about early singing swain Jackson C. Frank.

It'll Take a Long Time

(from *Sandy*)
Flying Burrito Brother, Sneaky Pete Kleinow on pedal steel pulls Sandy towards a voguish country rock place, but she's singing about sailors and sea and gentlemen again, so it's still resolutely English. The chorus is not much more than the title repeated while her voice echoes and eddies. Another downbeat yet curiously uplifting performance.

Quiet Joys Of Brotherhood

(from *Sandy*)
New York folk singer Richard Farina's lovely, impressionistic lyric, written in the early '60s, sounds ancient set to the Irish ballad, My Lagan Love. Sandy cut it several times, this version largely acapella with accompaniment by her own multi-tracked voice and a solo fiddle interlude from Swarb, as pretty as anything he ever played and she ever sung. An arresting Fairport version recorded in the summer of 1969 is available on expanded editions of *Liege & Lief*, Sandy singing over the pedal drone employed on Mimi Farina's 1968 original. Why it didn't make the cut on that album is a mystery.

The Lady

(from Sandy)

Another dramatic chord sequence with a hymnal uplift to it, underlined by a brooding orchestral part which eventually takes over during the solo section. Once again, the folky feel serves to wrong-foot you from realising Sandy's singing about someone she knows.

Man of Iron

(from *Pass Of Arms* soundtrack - available on expanded edition of *Sandy*)
Starting with a cello solo and a folksy recorder break, this extract from a 1972 film score by Peter Elford and Don Fraser, issued as one side of a rare single, finds Sandy accompanied by birdsong, 12-string guitar, creepy sound effects, synthesised wind, choir and random strings. Without the accompanying film it's illogical, to say the least, but it makes one realise how good she might have sounded over modern, fragmented arrangements, samples and electronics.

Solo

(from *Like An Old Fashioned Waltz*)
What many consider to be Sandy's finest album, opens with this remarkable song about the vanity and reclusiveness of the performer and the inevitability of loneliness, with its oddly rousing chorus: "We've all gone solo." People still disagree about Trevor's production, here heavy with organ and mellotron, is it overblown or sumptuous?

Like An Old Fashioned Waltz

(from *Like An Old Fashioned Waltz*)
To some degree, this album does the same thing repeatedly, as if stuck in an emotional groove, but it's one worth exploring. In this case, she considers the triggers and cliches of nostalgia while "violins play from behind garden walls."

No End

(from *Like An Old Fashioned Waltz*)
Sandy referred to Harry Robinson's orchestrations as the songs' fur coats. There have been complaints that they're saccharine or sentimental. I say they impart a golden-grey autumnal light with underlying chill that the

songs demand, nowhere more so than on this shivery beauty. (Saying that, an earlier solo piano version, available on expanded editions of the album, is also completely engrossing.) Typically oblique, and taken at a funereal pace, it begins as a rumination on Britain's surprise whenever it snows, before the travel-weary narrator pays a visit to an artist who has given up painting. The two friends persuade each other to return to the thing each of them loves but has abandoned, art and travel. The POV, and the key, shifts for the third verse to the painter, the final verse shifts again, into the third person, before Sandy admits in the last line that "This one has no end…" With several references to "time slipping away", like her earliest songs, it is naggingly, inexplicably sad.

One More Chance

(from *Rising For The Moon*)
An underrated album, yet it features one of her most heartfelt performances on this stirring anti-war song. Her voice is starting to sound careworn, but there's no loss of emotional clout. The moment where she bursts back into the song, after the extended instrumental break, singing "Is it too late?" is a career highlight.

I'm A Dreamer

(from *Rendezvous*)
Apparently cut in a single take in front of the orchestra, this is yet another melancholy but uplifting ballad and Sandy leans into it, her voice cracking, catching and full of emotional heft. Revel in the way she attacks the final word, "Go!"

All Our Days

(from *Rendezvous*)
Sounding a bit breathless by this stage, Sandy is still ethereal on the album's almost outrageous epic which, with its lush, melodramatic orchestration and cathedral ambience, sounds more like a Christmas service or a film soundtrack than a pop song.

Take Me Away (live)

(from *Gold Dust - Live At The Royalty Theatre)*

She’s in great voice on this late, live performance, the last complete live recording she made, released posthumously in the ‘90s.The band cooks and she soars though this song, arguably with more gusto than she managed on the *Rendezvous* rendition.

JONI MITCHELL

Joni Mitchell: Flower of the Prairie

Nine was a memorable age for Roberta Joan Anderson. Three things occurred that year, more than 60 years ago, which affect her to this day:

She moved with her mother and father to the place she would refer to as home, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, a small town founded by Methodists in 1883 as a teetotaller's haven, far from the city's temptations, in the heart of Canada's "sea of wheat".

She contracted polio, a usually crippling illness which, instead of taking her mobility, gave her, she thinks, the sensitivities of an artist.

She started smoking.

The three events were connected. Roberta Joan was born on November 7 1943 in Fort Macleod, in the prairie province of Alberta, the only child of William Anderson, a flight lieutenant in the Royal Canadian Air Force, and his wife Myrtle "Mickey" McKee, a teacher. When the war ended, Anderson moved his family between rented rooms in Saskatoon's satellite towns along highway 16: Maidstone, population 400 – where his daughter used to wave at the daily train as it passed her window – and North Battleford, where Bill managed one of the O.K. Economy chain of grocery stores and Mickey taught at a local school. Their house there was a pale, clapboard-covered, single-storey house with three steps up to the front door and a large twelve-paned picture window looking onto the highway.

"Things coming and going by that window left an impression on me," says Roberta Joan. "I think that set up a permanent longing in me to set off and go somewhere."

As a child she was prone to illness but curiously robust, surviving appendicitis and bouts of measles, chicken pox and scarlet fever. On the day before she was diagnosed with polio she was dressed, she remembers, in grey pegged slacks, a gingham blouse and a blue sweater. She looked in the mirror, noticed the dark rings under her eyes and thought, 'You look like a woman today.' On her way to school she had to sit, suddenly fatigued. It hurt her to stand again and she thought it was rheumatism – she'd seen her grandmother complain of it. The next morning she collapsed and was flown to hospital in an air ambulance.

In an out-take from a marvellous documentary about her life, *Woman of Heart And Mind*, she recalls that trip: "The flight was beautiful, very poetical. Every seven miles between North Battleford and Saskatoon was a small town. I remember writing in the fifth grade, I think, that they looked like 'Topaz broaches on the black velvet land' or something cornball like that."

The polio ward of St Paul's Hospital, Saskatoon was an isolation unit of temporary huts presided over by "rustling nuns". Joan's mother would visit wearing a mask to avoid contamination and, on one visit, brought her a Christmas tree. Joan was allowed to sit looking at it twinkling for a while after lights-out. It made her long to go home for Christmas, but the consultant didn't think she'd be well enough, in fact he was unsure she would ever walk again. The disease had twisted her spine forward and to the right, she could hardly stand.

Young Joan was a natural sceptic. Her forensic questioning of bible stories - "Adam and Eve meet, they're the first man and woman, they have two sons: Cain and Abel. Cain killed Abel, then got married. So who did he marry?" - didn't go down well at Sunday school, so she'd been skipping church. But now she was prepared to make a deal with God if she could walk home for Christmas.

"I don't know who I prayed to. I addressed it to the Christmas tree. I said 'I am not a cripple, not a cripple, not a cripple. I'm going home for Christmas. If I can pull this off. I'll make it up to you.'" There was a regimen of excruciating therapies, including having her legs bound in scalding hot wet rags. Joan bore it all and one day announced she was ready to go home.

"I walked. I went home for Christmas. So polio, in a way, germinated an inner life and a sense of the mystic. It was mystical to come back from that disease."

The deal with God In The Christmas Tree had one other lasting side-effect.

"I had this debt to pay back because I'd unfurled and walked. So I joined the church choir. And one night after choir practice, in the middle of the winter, a girl had snitched a pack of Black Cat cork cigarettes from her mother and we all sat by the wintery fish pond in the snow, and passed them around. Some girls choked and some threw up, and I took one puff and felt really smart! I just thought, 'Woah!'. My head cleared up. I seemed to see better and think better. So I was a smoker from that day on. Secretly, covertly. And I'm still smoking."

Ladies and gentlemen, Miss Joni Mitchell.

Music seeped into Joni Mitchell's life the way it must have for many war babies from modest backgrounds, from the radio mostly, and from a very few discs in the family parlour, classical recordings of 'Claire De Lune' and Brahms' 'Lullaby', in her case. But she was particularly transported by two records they didn't own: Rachmaninov's 'Rhapsody On A Theme By Paganini', used as the theme to the film, The Story Of Three Loves and Edith Piaf singing 'Trois Cloche (The Three Bells)'. She would return to a downtown record store to listen to these records over and over:

"Those two just nailed me, they hit some raw nerve inside." But at 75c each, she couldn't afford to buy them.

One morning at school, a new teacher divided the class into four streams: bluebirds, robins, wrens and crows, bluebirds being the A-graders, crows the failures. Joan, a robin, recalls wanting to be a crow – as she'd always liked that particular bird - and she realised that there was no one among the bluebirds she liked and that she had no aspirations to join them. Next, the teacher asked the class to copy a perspective drawing of a dog kennel. Joan's was easily the best likeness and she decided that, henceforth, she was happy to be an average bird with one thing she could do really well. She now considered herself an artist.

Teachers continued to exert a powerful influence on the teacher's daughter. There was the music teacher who rapped her knuckles when she began to improvise at the piano, providing her someone to remember with disdain forever. But others are remembered affectionately. Joni has often paid tribute to the pivotal role played by Arthur Kratzman, her seventh grade English master at Queen Elizabeth public school in Saskatoon. One afternoon as she was pinning up some of her pictures before a PTA meeting, the dashing "Gable and Peck rolled into one" complimented Joan on her work and remarked: "If you can paint with a brush, you can paint with words."

"I can see her now, in the back seat of the second row." he told *Rolling Stone* after Joni had dedicated her debut album to him, "a blond, bright-eyed kid. Very receptive to ideas." She took up extracurricular English classes and wrote poetry. Mr Kratzman handed back one epic verse with

many of its images ringed and comments such as "cliché" beside them. Rather than put her off, it spurred Joan on to be original.
She changed her name to Joni at the age of 13 because she liked the way art teacher Henry Bonli's name looked when he signed his paintings. "I always had star eyes, I was always interested in glamour," she has said. Beating polio only intensified her need to dance. She took ballroom dance classes and, at 14, would sneak out of the house "across the tracks" to lindy hop at rock'n'roll contests, simultaneously feeding another enduring need, to hang out with "unsuitable' kids.

"I was drawn to where the music was best, and it's always in the roughest areas," she told William Ruhlmann of *Goldmine* magazine in 1995. "And yet, the street had heart then, and a child, a baby, a clean-looking baby was not molested. If anything, they were very protective. First of all, they'd say, 'Get her out of here,' or, if I insisted on remaining, they'd make sure that someone saw me safely to the bus."

Attracted by the night world, coming alive after dark, tuned into all-night rock music beaming up from Texas, Joni increasingly felt out of step with her peers. "The way I saw the educational system from an early age was that it taught you what to think, not how to think," she told Cameron Crowe in an 1979 *Rolling Stone* cover story. "There was no liberty, really, for free thinking. I liked some of my teachers very much, but I had no interest in their subjects. So I would appease them – I would line the math room with ink drawings and portraits of the mathematicians. I did a tree of life for my biology teacher. I was always staying late at the school, down on my knees painting something."

She cultivated the image of herself as an artist. And she dressed well, thanks to part-time work she found modelling for department stores. She had access to cheap samples and always looked fashionable. She even wrote a column for the high school newspaper: "Fads & Fashions".
"I would go hang out on the streets dressed to the T, even in hat and gloves. I hung out downtown with the Ukrainians and the Indians; they were more emotionally honest and better dancers. When I went back to my own neighbourhood, I found that I had a provocative image. They thought I was loose because I always liked rowdies. I thought the way the kids danced at my school was kind of funny. I remember a recurring statement on my report card – 'Joan does not relate well.' I know that I was aloof. Perhaps some people thought I was a snob."

Playing her own music didn't really occur until late in her days at Aden Bowman High School. She bought a $36 baritone ukulele with money she'd made from her modelling work, because she didn't have quite enough to buy a guitar. She taught herself a few chords from a Pete Seeger music book and soon began to sing folk songs in coffee houses and even appeared on local TV. Aged 17, she left high school without having distinguished herself academically. It was the moment at which she had to decide whether or not she would permanently cross the tracks.

"There came a stage when my friends who were juvenile delinquents suddenly became criminals. They could go into very dull jobs or they could go into crime. Crime is very romantic in your youth. I suddenly thought, 'Here's where the romance ends. I don't see myself in jail.'"

That same year she discovered another important influence, a favour done for a school friend was repaid with a copy of The Hottest New Group In Jazz, an album by jazz vocal trio Lambert Hendricks and Ross, which included 'Twisted' and 'Centrepiece', songs which Joni would later record. The music's swing, humour, weaving voices and the group's evident singing and writing skills had a profound impact. "They were my Beatles," she remarked later.

Attending the Southern Alberta Institute Of Technology in Calgary, with ambitions to become a professional illustrator, Joni began singing in a coffee shop called The Depression. "In the beginning I thought of myself as a confident mimic of Joan Baez and Judy Collins," she told film maker Susan Lacy. "As a painter I had the need to innovate, as a musician. . .at that time it was just a hobby, I didn't think I had the gift to take it any further."

Even at art college she rebelled against the prevailing orthodoxy for abstract expressionism, and felt that many of the students were there for reasons other than a love of art. But she took a shine to one student Brad McMath, in fact she lost her virginity to him. And immediately fell pregnant.

Joni's overriding thoughts at that moment were of the shame. "A daughter could do nothing more disgraceful. You have no idea what the stigma was. It was like you murdered somebody," she told Robert Hilburn of the LA Times in 2004. Joni and Brad left college and moved to Toronto, supposedly to bring up the child together. "But we were not communicating," McMath told *MacLean's* magazine in 1997. In the winter of 1964 he decamped to California. Joni moved to a Victorian rooming

house on Huron Street and worked in the Simpsons-Sears department store. She couldn't afford the local Musicians Union dues of $160, so had to blag the occasional gig at the YMCA or at 'scab clubs' like The Purple Onion.

It was a lonely winter. One day another guy in her house, Duke Redbird, had a visit from his brother, John, who gave the her some apples. She never forgot this small kindness.

She gave birth to Kelly Dale Anderson on February 19, 1965 in a charity hospital where nurses would bind the breasts of the unwed mothers so they wouldn't produce milk. Two weeks later, Kelly was taken into foster care. "I had no money for diapers, no room to take her to. there was no career on the horizon," Joni told CBC in 1996. Feeling there was no hope of her supporting her child alone, she reluctantly gave Kelly up for adoption when the child was 6 months old....It haunted her for the next three decades, surfacing occasionally in her songs, most openly in Little Green, written in 1967 and recorded for *Blue* in 1971:

"Child, with a child, pretending
Weary of lies you are sending home
So you sign all the papers in the family name,
You're sad and you're sorry, but you're not ashamed/
Little Green, have a happy ending."

She told broadcaster Jian Ghomeshi of CBC in 2013: "The thing that keeps getting written is that I gave up my daughter to further my career. This is so wrong. There was no career. I was just a folk singer. I had a nice voice, I played okay, but there was no real gift, it was a way to get money to smoke and have pizza and go to a movie. I had to earn my fare to art school, because my parents disapproved, and there was nothing left over.

"What happened then was that (an unwed mother) didn't even see the daughter. The right thing to do to protect your parents was to get out of town and go into a home. In '65 the homes were full, things were changing but the pill was not available, it was very difficult to survive. At the time I had her I was destitute, no way I could take her out of the hospital into a blizzard, no job, no roof over my head, there weren't even foster homes available at the time because there were so many unwed mothers' children, but she was beautiful and she was taken into a foster home. I tried to get work and get a set up that I could bring her to. I couldn't get work 'cos I

couldn’t make 60 bucks to get into the union. I was beset by predators, people who wanted to tale advantage of the situation. You wouldn’t believe the gauntlets you have to run when you’re young and destitute.”

Joni Anderson met Chuck Mitchell only a month after Kelly was born, while performing at a Toronto club called The Penny Farthing. Chuck, a singer several years her senior, told her he could get her work in the US. They began dating, and after a few weeks she told him about her daughter, and he suggested they marry. The date was set three months away, June 19.

"I was emotionally weak with a lot of things pulling me in all sorts of directions and this was a strong pull, and something of a solution," Joni says in *A Woman of Heart And Mind*. "So we married, for all the wrong reasons. I made my wedding dress and bridesmaid's dresses. We had no money. I barely knew any of these people. I walked down the aisle brandishing my daisies thinking, 'I can get out of this.'"

Pictures of the reception show Joni in her bridal gown cradling a guitar, singing for the guests.

"Then, the moment we were married he intimated strongly he had no interest in raising another man's child. So I was trapped."

Three days later they performed together as a duo at a club in Michigan called The Folk Cellar. Chuck was eager to develop the act, though their styles weren't particularly suited. Joni continued to take solo bookings, notably one at Ontario's Mariposa Folk Festival, but performing as a duo made some sense. They moved to a cheap but roomy walk-up apartment in Detroit and throughout 1966 gathered a reputation as a strong booking in folk clubs on the Philly, Detroit, Toronto circuit, occasionally venturing further into the US, including Florida and at least one show at the Gaslight in New York where Joan Baez saw them play and told Joni she reminded her of Buffy St. Marie.

Their apartment was open-house for many visiting folk musicians and for a while, they "seemed like Detroit’s golden couple," but it was a false impression.

"We were living a lie. I looked relatively happy but I felt like I’d been betrayed. It was very difficult for me, so I began to write. I started writing to develop my own private world and also because I was disturbed."

Her earliest songs were simple expressions of loneliness on the road. The first was Day After Day, apparently written after the three-day trek to Mariposa. Mr. Kratzman would probably have sent this one back heavily ringed, but her next efforts included a more complex expression of the

bittersweet tension between settling and moving on, Urge For Going (a surprise country hit for George Hamilton IV in January 1967.) The theme resurfaced in other unrecorded songs, Born To Take The Highway and Poor Sad Baby. She also wrote more fanciful material, Daisy Summer Pipers and Dr Junk The Dentist Man to cheer up her club appearances, and then another future hit, The Circle Game When folk heroes like Buffy St. Marie, Dave Van Ronk and Tom Rush began to cover Joni's songs it only widened the gulf between her and Chuck.

"I was in the middle of a poker game some place in Michigan late in the evening," Mitchell recalled in *Goldmine*, "and I turned to a stranger, basically, sat next to me and said, 'I'm leaving my husband tonight. Will you help me?' We rented a U-Haul truck and drove back to Detroit. I separated what I considered was a fair split, 50 percent of the furniture, and the stranger and I hauled it on our own backs down the fifth-floor walk-up in the middle of the night, and I moved out."

When he found out what had happened, Chuck Mitchell, immediately changed the locks, effectively shutting the door after the horse had bolted.

"She was very ambitious, very calculating and very self-centred - and so was I," Chuck told the *Daily Mai*l in 1996, noting that she left him a month after getting her Green card to work in the US. "She wanted to escape her Canadian upbringing and get on the big stage. She always knew what she wanted. I became excess baggage about six months after we got together. And it was really hard for me. I'd waited a long time to get married. This was it. I felt 'What's wrong with me?' and had phases of resentment and anger. But gradually this faded." (Chuck Mitchell has been appearing as American minstrel legend Stephen Foster in occasional performances of a two-man touring show called Mr Foster and Mr Twain since 1990.)

"I feel grateful for every bit of trouble I went through," Joni says in *Woman Of Heart And Mind.* "Bad fortune changed the course of my destiny, I became a musician."

Ladies and gentlemen, Mrs. Joni Mitchell.

She performed solo for only the next five years, but it's this period that endures in Joni Mitchell's public image, the striking ingenue with the river-clear soprano and the plangent guitar, the avenging angel of the lovelorn, the mermaid sired by a seahorse. To describe someone by their contradictions may be a cliché, but early reports and footage from her breakthrough years depict a young woman shimmering with contrasts. To seem simultaneously one-of-us and regally aloof, to be self-possessed and serious for one song and girlishly silly during the next, to appear otherworldly, driven and wise beyond your years whilst also seeming lost, vulnerable, guileless and naive – these are golden qualities for the putative star, and they shone from the girl with the unspoken torment behind pale, flashing eyes.

Charisma shone from her playing too. Her guitar technique was quite extraordinary. Being self-taught, she'd never really learnt standard chords, and her left hand, weakened by polio, couldn't always make the requisite shapes, so she would meander along the fretboard with a logic all her own. In New York, folk singer Eric Anderson, a close friend to this day, showed her open-G tuning, Tom Rush played in open-C. These opened up a universe of possibilities. She would explore alternative tunings so thoroughly that, at the end of the '70s, someone calculated that only two of her recorded songs were in regular Spanish guitar EADGBE mode.

"For years everybody said 'Joni's weird chords, Joni's weird chords' and I thought, How can chords be weird? Chords are depictions of your emotions, they feel like my feelings. I called them Chords of Inquiry, they had a question mark in them. There were so many unresolved things in me that those suspended chords that I found by twisting the knobs on my guitar, they just suited me."

For that first summer, she booked herself gigs at an impressive string of festivals and began to get a sense that she was becoming famous. Playing for the first time at the Newport Folk Festival she was stunned when people queuing outside a venue gasped with awe when her road-manager Janie gave the door staff her name, "My eyes bugged out of my head. I had the strangest reaction: I turned on my heel and I ran for ten blocks in the other direction. It pumped me so full of adrenaline, I bolted like a deer." Indeed, her reputation was strong enough to secure a few shows in England that

same summer. Through the auspices of the ubiquitous Joe Boyd, she appeared at The Marquee, supported The Incredible String Band at The Speakeasy and sang at folk clubs in Leicester and Birmingham (The Jug O'Punch, Digbeth Town Hall, no less). Boyd also gave demos of her songs to his latest signings Fairport Convention, who included Chelsea Morning and I Dont Know Where I Stand on their debut album the following year.

In October 1967, at the Cafe Au Go Go in Greenwich Village, an excitable young man named Elliot Roberts was transfixed by Joni's performance. "She was a jumble of creative clutter with a guitar case full of napkins, road maps and scraps of paper, all covered with lyrics," Roberts recalled in *Woman Of Heart And Mind*. "I told her I was a personal manager and I'd kill to work with her. She said, I'm leaving tomorrow and going on the road for about three weeks. I said, Can I go with you? And she said, I'm flying to Ann Arbor, if you pay your own expenses you can come with me, and I did." The pair bonded smoking joints in their Ann Arbor hotel. Joni enjoyed the ribald humour of this guy who usually managed comedians. He was hired.

The new partnership moved fast. Though they rejected a deal with Vanguard and found resistance from several other labels who told them folk music was over, within five months, Joni's debut album for Reprise was in the stores. "She had a backlog of 25 songs that most people would dream of writing in their entire career," Roberts recalls. "And she had them before she'd even started recording." The album was ostensibly produced by another new partner, David Crosby, who'd also been mesmerised by her singing in a club in Coconut Grove, Florida. "She rocked me back on my feet, pinned me to the wall with two inch spikes," he remembers.

"He was tanned. He was straight. He was clearing out his boat, and it was going to be the beginning of a new life for him," Joni said of their meeting to Cameron Crowe in 1979. "He had a wonderful sense of humour. Crosby has enthusiasm like no one else. He can make you feel like a million bucks. Or he can bring you down with the same force. I had just come back from London. That was during the Twiggy, Biba era, and I wore a lot of makeup. I think I even had on false eyelashes, so one of his first projects in our relationship was to encourage me to let go of all of this elaborate war paint. "

"Joan calls me up and says, 'Listen, I'm fucking a Byrd'," recalls Roberts. "I go, 'Excuse me?'"

Crosby was soon showing her off to his Laurel Canyon circle and his patronage helped her debut album, *Song To A Seagull*, happen the way she wanted. "David was very enthusiastic about the music – he was twinkly about it!" Joni told writer Barney Hoskyns. "He was going to protect the music and pretend to produce me. So we just went for the performance, with a tiny bit of sweetening. I think perhaps without David's protection the record company might have set some kind of producer on me who'd have tried to turn an apple into an orange. And I don't think I would have survived that. The net result of that was that [engineer] Henry Lewy and I made 13 albums together without a producer." Crosby continues to be modest about his contribution to the record, but was proud of at least one production technique: he stood Joni near a miked-up grand piano and recorded the reverberation of the strings as she sang. And when his short tenure as swain and producer was over, Crosby was heard to mutter that Joni Mitchell was "about as modest as Mussolini", but affectionately, you understand.

Joni Mitchell (aka *Song To A Seagull)* was released in March 1968 ("Joni Mitchell is 90% Virgin" ran one of Reprise's famously glib ads), by which time she was fully absorbed into the LA circle. She introduced Roberts to her Canadian friend Neil Young – whom he still manages today – and to Crosby. Roberts introduced her to David Geffen – his old friend from the William Morris mailroom – who became her agent. Through Crosby she met Graham Nash and stopped "fucking a Byrd" to be with him. He was awe-struck by her. She didn't mind that at all, and enjoyed his Mancunian edge. He watched her tearfully receive a standing ovation at Carnegie Hall with her parents in the audience. The sound of Crosby, Stills and Nash, now stable-mates of Joni's at Geffen-Roberts management, audibly influenced her delivery on her second album *Clouds*.

By the time it appeared in May 1969 ("Joni Mitchell Finally Comes Across" chirped the ad) her songs had been hits for George Hamilton IV (Urge For Going), Tom Rush (The Circle Game) and Judy Collins (Both Sides, Now) and she'd earned a reported $500,000. *Clouds* would win a Grammy. Joni Mitchell was the uncrowned Queen Of The Canyon.

It was David Geffen who stopped her playing at Woodstock. "We got to the airport and I saw the TV report – 400,000 people sitting in mud – and I turned to Joni and said, 'Let's not go.'" In any case, it was calculated that she could not get onto the site and back in time to make her scheduled nationwide TV debut, The Dick Cavett Show, that same evening. But Crosby Stills and Nash chartered a helicopter, got in, played and got out in time to gatecrash Joni's TV slot. She has variously said she was mortified not to be with the boys down on Yasgur's Farm and has dismissed it: "Woodstock? That was all silly." Nevertheless, she played a significant role in the event's history. "By the time we got back to the hotel the song Woodstock had basically been written," says Nash.

"[With that song] she contributed more to people's understanding of that event than anyone who was there," says Crosby in the documentary.

"Joni has this fantastic drive to create all the time," Nash told a reporter from the *Saskatoon Star Phoenix* in August 1969. "If nothing constructive is done during the day, she feels dissatisfied. She's got to be doing something, even if it's making rhubarb pie." It wasn't merely 'two cats

in the yard' chez Nash & Mitchell, it was two musicians tussling for first turn at the piano every sun-kissed morning. And Nash soon realised who was getting the best results.

"It was an interesting clash of 'I want to get as close to you as possible' and 'Leave me alone to create,'" he says. "When Joni works it's almost like she channels. She was gone for hours, she was physically there, but she wasn't listening, I'd say things to her but she was gone, and it was a great thing to see someone taken away by vision."

Nash was regularly being taken away by the big yellow taxi to perform as part of the hottest new act in rock. Joni was on the road herself for 40 weeks of that year. The two acts appeared together many times, notably for a week at the Greek Theatre in LA just after Woodstock, and at the Big Sur Folk Festival. She was now too big a star to play club dates but felt uncomfortable at the bigger gigs, didn't enjoy festival and arena shows. It was time to think of another way to lead her life. Graham and Joni were set fair to be the golden couple of the counterculture. He asked her to marry him. And she agreed.

But then she thought about her grandmothers.

"My grandmothers both were frustrated musicians in different ways," she told Barney Hoskyns. "My paternal grandmother came from Norway, and the story has it that the last time she cried in her life she was 14, and she was crying because she knew she would never have a piano. And she became a stoic. She had a miserable, nasty life. She had 11 kids and married a mean, poor drunk, but, as far as anyone knows, never wept again through all the hardship in all her adult life. My maternal grandmother, on the other hand, was a classical musician who came East when the Prairies opened up by train. She was Scottish-French, and they brought an organ in for her and a gramophone. She was a poet and musician, but she still kicked the kitchen door off its hinges out of her frustration at being trapped in the role of a housewife."

Reflecting on these women she felt strongly that it had fallen to her to fulfil a genetic drive, to use the chances to lead a creative life that they had been denied. She realised she could not marry Graham and settle down. "It broke my heart," she says.

These thoughts were coming to a head as Graham's cosy tribute to their life together, Our House, was being unveiled along with the hit version of Joni's Woodstock, on Crosby Stills Nash & Young's *Déjà Vu*, released in

March 1970, just before Joni's second gold album, *Ladies Of the Canyon* (which includes Willy, a slightly ambiguous love song for Graham). She wasn't at home to see either success. In fact she did nothing to promote her album, bar a long-standing booking at that summer's Mariposa Festival, for this was the time of her "retirement" and the odyssey around Europe. Telling Nash she needed some space to write and consider where she was going next, she fled. Some weeks later, Nash received a telegram from Greece. It's last line said: "If you hold sand too tightly in your hand it will run through your fingers."

"It was Joan's way of saying goodbye to me," he says.

Travelling with her friend Penelope, Joni wound up, in late February 1970, in Matala, a fishing village on the northern coast of Crete, where a few dozen hippies had made homes in caves on the shore. One of them, Cary Raditz, was a truculent young man, a former copywriter from North Carolina who'd come to Greece with his German girlfriend (who'd since left) and cooked in Delfini's, the local taverna. He became the inspiration for the "redneck on a Grecian Isle" in California, and the "mean ol' daddy" in Carey (a misspelling), whose "cane", was actually a broken shepherd's crook. "I had a nasty, aggressive character then, and I was feisty," Raditz told the Wall Street Journal in 2014. "I was always getting into fights at the taverna - probably losing more than I won. I suppose she hung around me after her friend left because she knew people wouldn't dare come up to my cave without permission, so it was a haven for her of sorts, even though the cave was small, around 8 by 16 feet." Raditz became used to hearing Joni endlessly strumming the dulcimer trying to find songs. "She'd go into a kind of trance, and things would come out of that. I'm not a musician, but what sounded to the average ear like monotony eventually flowered." Joni played Carey to him as a birthday present, April 19, 1970, in his cave. "I was surprised by it, since I'm the subject. But I wasn't blown away. It sounded like a ditty. Something she had tossed off."

Joni made it clear she wasn't going to stick around for long. After two months, she returned to LA. Raditz returned to the US in July, and missed her, but knew he was "in over my head". He didn't see her again until a visit to LA in 1971. Joni had just cut the album and Cary was invited into the studio to hear the songs about him, but their relationship was over.

Blue was bathed in a peculiar harmony of deep sorrow and joyful nostalgia, its songs weaving through doubt, inner peace, love, resentment

and sweet freedom. Seldom has such a complex emotional fabric been so eloquently but succinctly woven, and it wasn’t just being sung about - the emotions themselves, particularly the pleasant ache of nostalgia, were audibly captured in the music, so lifelike they can still be felt afresh today. Such candour and insight were hard-won.

"During the making of *Blue* I was so thin-skinned and delicate that if anybody looked at me I'd just burst into tears," Joni says in *Woman Of Heart And Mind*. "I felt so vulnerable and naked in my work. I was demanding of myself a deeper and greater honesty, more and more revelation in order to give it back to the people to that it strikes against the very nerves of their life, and to do that you have to strike against the very nerves of your own."

In *Blue* she was unafraid of admitting to self-pity, bitterness and capriciousness, but handles her confessions so skilfully that they invite only empathy. *Blue* held up an emotional mirror for a generation and made Joni even more celebrated. The result was something resembling a nervous breakdown.

"Ironically, my psychological descent coincided with my ascent into the public eye," she says. "I hated that lofty adoration. I isolated myself, made my attempt to get back to the garden. I was going down and with that came a tremendous sense of knowing nothing." For a year she fled to the Canadian back bush, read psychology and philosophy books by the light of paraffin lamps and tried to make sense of her lot. Most of the books received short shrift. Western philosophies, she decided, were just not smart enough.

She became aware that some kind of readjustment of the pendulum was only to be expected. She saw that it might be like this every time she ventured so far into her truth. She saw too that it may not be wise to "cure" oneself of some of these reactions, that some were vital to continue to create. "Depression can be the sand that makes the pearl," she says. "If you get rid of the demons the angels can fly off too."

Her next work, *For The Roses* is undervalued in her canon, but ranks as a worthy companion to *Blue*, albeit one more melancholy, less starry-eyed. The songs become several notches more oblique as Joni begins to edge away from using her present pain as inspiration. (The title track includes her first of many recorded swipes at the music business.) Tom Scott's flutes impart a chilled air, it's the sound of tarnish forming on an ideal; and obviously composed in the Canadian backwoods rather than a warm LA kitchen or on a Greek island. You might argue that this, the last of her predominantly solitary works, is also the first to ask the listener to stay at arm's length. From this point, no matter how personal the song, Joni would keep something back. The distant shot of her naked on the inner sleeve provided a visual clue. It was originally intended as the cover shot, but the always pragmatic Roberts derailed this by asking Joni, "How would you like a sticker saying $5.98 across your ass?!"

Asylum was Geffen and Roberts' home for singer-songwriters that other labels couldn't handle. Geffen was now the most feted wunderkind in the music business. He'd just signed Bob Dylan to the label and was dating Cher. When Joni returned from Canada he offered her a room in his house. And soon she was moving to his label too. *Court And Spark*, her 1974 "discourse on romantic love" was Asylum 1001 – a big US chart-topping success, and a true child of its time, with its deeper shades of jazz, blasts of rock and subtle band arrangements.

Those who continued to seek some kind of psychic balm from her music may have been disappointed by songs about Geffen (Free Man In Paris – and who would admit to writing a positive song for their label boss today?) and a disturbed rich kid (Trouble Child) but new fans found it hip and approachable: here was a Joni you could dinner-party to. *Court & Spark*'s innovations like Car On A Hill lit the way for the rise of Steely Dan and other '70s sophistications; it was rapturously received in the US, though next to the confessional heft of her previous albums it could be accused of seeming a little pleased with itself.

But maybe it was just the sound of Joni relaxing; as she began working with a band – and dating drummer John Guerin – her rock and jazz influences, her dancing years, began to step forward. She had a crew to hang out, travel and confer with, she was getting her groove back and

enjoying it enough to tour for much of 1974, the shows captured on the successful double live album *Miles Of Aisles.*

And because she didn't have to do it all with just a voice and a guitar she could now fly with the poetry too. For many fans, *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns*, which showed up late in 1975, was shockingly opaque, nearly indigestible.

"I was back to doing portraits [in the songs]," she told *Goldmine* in 1995. "and the result of that subtle change was a lot of people didn't like *Hissing*. If I'm saying 'I'm like this', that 'I' could be them or, if it got too vulnerable, they could say, 'It's her'. But the moment I started doing portraits again, saying 'you', a lot of people saw themselves more than they wanted to. Then they'd get mad at me."

Misunderstood at the time, its reputation has suffered unfairly. Yet, as all her records have, *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns* has many adherents who think it her masterpiece. Bravura songs such as The Jungle Line – a richly evocative lyric propelled by Burundi drumming – and the almost acapella Shadows And Light, are as stunning as anything in her catalogue.

Her next album, *Hejira*, characterised by the distinctive, protean bass of Jaco Pastorius, was less baffling, being born of Joni’s reflections on a road trip. Its attractive beatnik-into-the-horizon mood on key works like Coyote, Amelia and Furry Sings The Blues has won it ardent champions down the years, after an initially grumpy reception:

"The reflections of a rich, faithless, compulsively romantic female are only marginally more valuable than those of her marginally more privileged male counterparts, especially the third or fourth time around," harumphed Robert Christgau, for example. It regularly tops internet polls among fans for their favourite Joni Mitchell album.

Don Juan's Reckless Daughter, on the other hand, remains comparatively unloved. Never mind arms length, this was Joni keeping her fans at intellect's length, delving further into experiments with form, reaching some kind of zenith (or nadir, depending on your stance) with the extraordinary Paprika Plains, a 16-minute piece edited from two half-hour piano improvisations, with overlaid lyrics and orchestration. And whoever expected (or welcomed) a seven minute percussion workout like The Tenth World on a Joni Mitchell record?

As the records became ever more painterly and reliant on nuance, it's fair to say no one was whistling Joni's material any longer, nor, probably,

using it for emotional reassurance. She was breathing rarified air and her listeners were required to climb with her, the lyrics sometimes so densely poetic they effectively repelled melody. She was creating a new genre for one, shedding her former image and withdrawing from any kind of scrutiny. In 1975, 1977 and 1978 there were no shows, no interviews – even though each of those years included major releases – as Joni wandered deeper into her work.

Until she wandered off the map. She did permanent damage to her fanbase with the release of *Mingus* – a collaboration with the great jazz composer Charles Mingus, who was terminally ill with a rare degenerative disease and asked her to write lyrics to six of his melodies. It was his last creative act. His demanding, cantankerous spirit seemed to yank Joni out of her reveries and makes it – to this writer's ear – a far more approachable and beautiful record than *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter* and some which followed. It's also both sassy and less self-regarding, welcoming someone else's muse. The skilful poetry gives it Joni's stamp, but its undeniably a jazz record and, though she justifiably expected that, for example, the audience that bought millions of copies of Steely Dan's *Aja* might have dug it, *Mingus* received howls of disapproval from both the rock audience and the jazz world. It was terrific work, inexplicably mauled, and Joni felt she had no choice but to have yet another rethink. Retire some more.

People seemed to stop noticing Joni Mitchell’s work in the 1980s. So much so that in the 1990s she cropped up in a nationally syndicated American newspaper’s Where Are They Now? column. Maybe it was because, for the first time, her music in the ‘80s swam with and disappeared into the prevailing tide. Bowing to pressure to sound contemporary, she released records full of hooting synths, chiming chorused guitars, barn-sized drums and guest stars, which few needed then and which sound dated now. (Like the mismatched but fascinating duet with Billy Idol in Dancin’ Clown on *Chalk Mark In A Rain Storm*.) Though she began a ten year relationship and enduring musical partnership with gifted bass player and producer Larry Klein, Joni found herself clashing with people who’d been close to her for a long time. Like Elliot Roberts, whom she left in 1985, saying that he needed managing more than she did (though they remain on good terms) and David Geffen (she left his label, but again has said they bear no grudges). She suffered from financial woes, stating later that this was the decade when everyone she trusted ripped her off. She survived a serious car crash, but found her health began to cause her problems, discovering that polio has a tendency to haunt sufferers when they reach their 40s.

Thoughts of her daughter never left her.

As the woman who was born Kelly Dale Anderson came into her 20s, Joni found herself increasingly wondering who her daughter was and what she looked like, wondering if she might suddenly see her. Despite leaving clues in Little Green and Chinese Café ("My child’s a stranger, I bore her but I could not raise her."), and the occasional mention in interviews, she’d effectively kept her secret from the world until a miscarriage in 1990 made it clear she could never have another child. After that, and her divorce from Larry Klein in 1994, she began to talk more openly about her lost child and said she wanted to trace her.

Kilauren Gibb, daughter of teachers David and Ira Gibb was a model: willowy, fair, great cheekbones, a smoker since the age of 12.... She'd been educated at private schools, and studied at Harvard and the University of Toronto, growing up in the comfortable middle-class community of Don Mills, a Toronto suburb. It was not until she was 27, pregnant with her first child and researching her medical history, that she fully realised she had been adopted. Friends had tried to tell her before, but she hadn't believed

them. She applied to the Children's Aid Society for information about her birth mother. It took them nearly five years to offer a response, a "non-identifying" description – some dates and a few biographical details, such as: "Mother a folk singer, born in Saskatoon of Norwegian-Scottish descent. Suffered from polio in childhood."

Unfortunately, not being a Joni Mitchell fan, she didn't spot the connection. Nor did she surf the net, immediately, which might have led her to her mother. What did was a truly bizarre chain of coincidence.

Remember Joni's fellow tenant in the Huron Street rooming house, Duke Redbird and his brother, John, who gave Joni some apples? In 1998, Duke confided in a friend, Annie Mandlsohn, that he'd lived next to Joni and that she'd had a baby and nobody knew about it. Eight years later, not long after Joni publicly announced that she was looking for her daughter, Anne Mandlsohn's boyfriend Tim Campbell introduced her to a girl named Kilauren Gibb: they'd grown up together in Don Mills with Ted Barrington, Kilauren's current boyfriend. Gibb showed Mandlsohn the "non-identifying" description of her birthmother. Mandlesohn's reaction was unexpected: "Kilauren! Your mother is Joni Mitchell!" She'd remembered Duke Redbird and put two and two together. Gibb spoke to Redbird and then contacted Wally Breece, the webmaster at jonimitchell.com, who by this time was receiving a steady stream of e-mails from young women either hoping, or convinced, they were Joni's long-lost daughter. Gibb's details checked out, so he passed the information onto Joni's manager, Steve Macklam. A few days later there was a message on Gibb's phone: "Hi, it's Joni. Please call me. I'm overwhelmed." In March 1997, mother and daughter finally met again. Little Green, have a happy ending.

Such reunions can never be easy, but with so much public interest in the fairy tale there was an uncontrolled explosion of media activity. Gibb found herself deluged with requests for interviews and TV appearances. Her boyfriend Barrington, acting as an unofficial agent, was out of his depth and ruffled feathers on all sides, leading to accusations that he – and by extension Kilauren – was money-grabbing. Kilauren's parents were upset, afraid they might lose their daughter to her more glamorous birthmother. They too were faced with a media barrage. Kilauren’s birth father, Brad McMath, and his new family were also hauled into the spotlight. Joni's parents, now both in their 80s, were tracked down and asked to comment. Even Chuck Mitchell was suddenly required, 32 years on, to say what he

thought about his famous ex-wife's motives. Overnight, Joni had become a mother, a grandmother and the centre of a circus. "I've had pain and joy in my life but nothing like this," she said.

After the initial euphoria of the reunion, there were leaked reports of stormy scenes developing between mother and daughter, who appeared to be cast from similar moulds. In 2000, news broke of a custody battle between Barrington and Gibb over their 20-month old daughter. (Gibb's older son was by a different father.) In the bid to make each other seem unfit parents, some extreme accusations were bandied about, including attempts to paint Gibb as unstable by publishing police reports of supposedly violent quarrels. Gibb admitted things had been very stressful but was sure it would all be fine in time. Joni kept her distance.

In 2002, as she released *Travelogue*, an excellent, moving two-disc reappraisal of songs from throughout her career, Joni Mitchell announced her retirement from a music business she declared "repugnant" and "a cesspool". She spent considerable time on the short promotional round bad-mouthing executives at her long-term label, Reprise, who'd rejected the album (which subsequently came out on another Warner Music imprint, Nonesuch). Taking sideswipes at everyone from Madonna to MTV and David Letterman, criticising the entire arena she was required to function in, Mitchell branded it corrupt and banal, a business reluctant to pay artists and interested only in signing compliant kids.

"They're not looking for talent," she told James Reginato of W magazine. "They're looking for a look and a willingness to co-operate. A woman my age, no matter how well preserved, no longer has the look. And I've never had a willingness to co-operate."

"Joni has a lot of residual resentments – old baggage, so to speak – with the music business in general," Warner's creative director Jeff Ayerhoff responded. "She needed a music company which operates as an 'art gallery'...[She] needs to move forward with more positiveness."

She opted to move forward doing something else, concentrating on another lifelong love, her paintings, which she occasionally exhibits but doesn't sell, and with overseeing reissues of her work.

In Sptember 2003, Robert Hilburn of the LA Times interviewed an apparently content Joni and reported that she had "found joy in the simple pleasures of being a grandmother of a boy, 11, and a girl, 5. Now, the family spends time with her in Bel-Air and she spends time near them in Canada."

Joni emphasised that she was happy and in love with this phase of her life, but felt that, at 60, romantic love was over for her.

And the retirement? She stated firmly once more that she has no further desire to make music. The voluntary withdrawal from the profession that had made Roberta Joan Anderson famous came at the beginning of a new century, at a time when the critical stock of Joni Mitchell had never been higher. A new generation of singer-songwriters, many of them young women, pointed to records like *Blue* as the gold standard of their art. Musicians from all quarters continued to find things to wonder at in her melodies. Prince called *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns* "the greatest record

ever made". But, more significantly, fans old and new returning to her work were increasingly struck by the candour with which her songs had reflected the many episodes of her life, from the polio wards of her childhood through the tumult of her adolescence, from her improbable transformation into the Queen of Laurel Canyon to the eventual reunion with Little Green. Those songs tell the story of a life, not merely a career.

"In some ways, my gift for music and writing was born out of tragedy, really, and loss," she concluded. "When my daughter returned to me, the gift kind of went with it. The songwriting was almost like something I did while I was waiting for my daughter to come back."

It was as if, having spent a career moving from weird sustained chord to sustained chord, Joni finally heard a loud, resolving chord she liked, and put down the guitar.

But it wasn’t quite over.

In 2006, Joni announced she was making another album, possibly to be called *Strange Birds Of Appetite*. She had made a deal with Starbucks' label Hear Music to record new music, inspired, she said, by a growing outrage at environmental issues and by the utterances of her grandson, who coined the phrase "Bad dreams are good, in the great plan" which she had turned into a song called Bad Dreams. The 10-song album appeared in September 2007 as *Shine*.

It opens with an instrumental, One Week Last Summer. (which went on to take a Grammy for the year's Best Instrumental Performance) and closes with a song based on Rudyard Kipling's poetic chestnut, If. In between are originals that Joni said were “as serious a work as I've ever done”, arranged sparely around a small band featuring Larry Klein on bass and loyal drummer Brian Blade. In the lyrics, she sounds lofty, but not quite haughty, a tone of exasperation in the environmental songs If I Had A Heart and This Place, a song inspired by the desecration of the mountain behind her home. Hena and Night Of the Iguana summon the widescreen, worldy-jazz of her ‘80s recordings and there’s a zydeco flavoured revisit of Big Yellow Taxi. Her voice sounds husky and breathless, an instrument still expressive if not as pliable as it used to be.

After that, silence once again, a reported second album with Starbucks failed to materialise. In 2010, Joni announced that she was suffering from Morgellon’s Syndrome, a controversial ailment, dismissed by some as a delusional condition. Sufferers describe feelings of extreme discomfort

under their skin, as if it is crawling with creatures or they are being repeatedly stung. Lesions in the skin appear to produce tiny fibres, sharp, fine hairs like fibre-glass. Under examination these have proved to be cellulose, which the body can't produce, or to have DNA akin to a fungus. The presence of something called agrobacterium has led some to believe this may be linked to genetically modified foods. Whatever the causes, sufferers experience intense pain and symptoms of brain fog, depression, disorientation and lethargy.

In a interview with Matt Diel in the LA Times in April 2010, Joni outlined her experience of the condition.

"I have this weird, incurable disease that seems like it's from outer space. Two nights ago, I went out for the first time since Dec. 23: I don't look so bad under incandescent light, but I look scary under daylight. Garbo and Dietrich hid away just because people became so upset watching them age, but this is worse. Fibres in a variety of colours protrude out of my skin like mushrooms after a rainstorm: they cannot be forensically identified as animal, vegetable or mineral. … In America, the Morgellons is always diagnosed as 'delusion of parasites,' and they send you to a psychiatrist. I'm actually trying to get out of the music business to battle for Morgellons sufferers to receive the credibility that's owed to them."

By 2013, little had changed. The ailment had still not been recognised by the medical establishment. Talking with Jian Ghomeshi of CBC, to promote a concert in tribute to her, she talked about turning 70, went into some detail describing the songwriting process and discussed her renewed need to paint, saying she always thought of herself as a painter who made music.

"Painting is my mother tongue," she said and declared songwriting was "frustrated film-making."

"Usually the music comes first and then I mantra it, play it over and over, in that trance-like state I go, okay, here's where the pinnacle thought has to go, the most important idea. Then I'll get the melody and go over it with something phonetic, maybe it all comes in one day, or the course of the week, in some cases it's taken as long as seven years to get the libretto.

"Poetry is stirring up thoughts, watching the thought process, which is anti-Buddhism, you're selecting from a busy head, evaluating. With painting the head process is completely different, it's meditation, it comes down to synapses, it's non-verbal, the discourse has been silenced."

One other thing that had been silenced was her singing voice.

“I don’t mind ageing as long as I’m healthy, it’s hard to tell what’s age decline and what’s the disease. I’ve got a lot of things I still want to accomplish and savour. But I can’t sing. I can’t control it like I used to. You have to know when to quit.”

As I write this, Joni is about to release a new compilation of her work, four hours of music, 53 songs across four discs gathered as *Love Has Many Faces*. She subtitles it “A Quartet, A Ballet Waiting To Be Danced”, having spent two years dividing the songs into the four acts or narratives. It’s as quirky, single-minded and assured as anything she’s ever released. If this is really her final word as a maker of records, and I wouldn't bet that it is, it’s a typically bold and accomplished way to say farewell. There’s an air of defiance to it: I did all this extraordinary work, very few people can say as much, don’t take it for granted.

Ladies and gentlemen, Joni Mitchell.

Joni Mitchell: A chronological playlist

I Had A King
(from *Song To A Seagull* aka *Joni Mitchell*)
Debut album, track one, side one, that bird-like soprano and hypnotic guitar, playing – what else? – a song of romantic disillusion: "I can't go back there any more, and all my keys won't fit the door."

Chelsea Morning
(from *Clouds)*
A sunny, great-to-be-alive, late '60s staple. "Won't you stay, we'll put on the day and wear it 'til the night comes."

Songs To Ageing Children Come
(from *Clouds*)
Strange, trilling folk song starring double-tracked Joni at her chilliest. She also crops up singing it in the film *Alice's Restaurant.*

Big Yellow Taxi
(from *Ladies Of the Canyon*)
The hit, and a first clue that Joni loves to dance. Youthful, witty and true with a punchline - 'You don't know what you've got til it's gone'- that's entered the language.

Urge For Going
(from *Hits*)
She once described this spooky creation as her only protest song. "It's a protest against winter coming!" Passed by Tom Rush to George Hamilton IV who made it a big country hit in January 1967. Joni recorded her beautiful version for *Blue* in 1971 but replaced it at the last minute.

California
(from *Blue*)

On her 1970 European sojourn, reflecting on her separation from Nash, Joni wrote this letter home. Despite dated and specific images – "I'm gonna see the folks I dig, I'll even kiss a Sunset pig" – it somehow remains a timeless and universal expression of homesickness and longing.

River

(from *Blue*)

The national anthem of the state of Nostalgia. Doubles as a great song of remorse at the end of an affair, with an unforgettable central image: "I wish I had a river I could skate away on."

A Case Of You

(from *Blue*)

Sounding as if it's strummed on heartstrings, this defining moment in the development of singer-songwriterdom has kept well: robust, full-bodied and heady. One of her most covered works.

You Turn Me On, I'm A Radio

(from *For The Roses*)

This attempt at a hit single was unlikely to fly, but it's lovely anyway, with a Dylan-ish intro and sunbeam guitar part. The album's title-track is an overlooked gem as well, recreating some of the magic of *Blue*.

Raised On Robbery

(from *Court And Spark*)

Joni throws off her stays and shows her lindy-hopping roots. Reviewing it as a single in the music press, John Peel said this song proved she had "become, once again, a leader."

The Jungle Line

(from *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns*)

A breathtaking lyric weaving the art of Henri Rousseau, the advance of jazz and the encroachment of drugs, sung over Burundi warrior drumming and rasping Moog. Only Joni would attempt such a thing. A unique piece of work.

Amelia

(from *Hejira*)

The spirit of Amelia Earhart provides solace after yet another forsaken romance. Six vapour trails in the sky become "a hexogram of the heavens...the strings of my guitar".

God Must Be A Boogie Man

(from *Mingus*)

With Jaco Pastorius she celebrates another idiosyncratic bass player, the multifaceted Charles Mingus, in a liquid, funny and erudite tribute.

The Dry Cleaner From Des Moines

(from *Mingus*)

Cheerfully exuberant number concerning an unlikely guy getting lucky in Las Vegas "like Midas in a polyester suit", mixing Mingus's swagger with Joni's love for Lambert Hendricks and Ross.

Nothing Can Be Done

(from *Night Ride Home*)

Car-door snares, far-off, vaguely African guitars, guest vocals and slithering bass. If you can get past the fabulous '80s sound of 1991, you'll find this has a narcotic charm.

Sex Kills

(from *Turbulent Indigo*)

Joni extrapolates rapper Just Ice's personalised licence plates into a stinging meditation on modern times. "Lawyers haven't been this popular since Robespierre slaughtered half of France. . .the gas leaks, the oil spills and sex sells everything. Sex kills." Altogether now!

The Magdelene Laundries

(from *Turbulent Indigo*)

Finding empathy with Ireland's unwed mothers of yore, Joni sings an elegant tribute to the shunned girls forced into servitude, to the accompaniment of ghosts.

Man From Mars

(from *Taming The Tiger*)
A moving, heartfelt song, commissioned for the film *Grace Of My Heart* to mark the death of a pivotal character. In fact, it's Joni mourning the disappearance of a favourite cat, Nietzche: "I fall apart, every time I think of you, swallowed by the dark". As she finished the recording, he came back, after 18 days AWOL.

Both Sides, Now

(from *Both Sides Now*)
Mature Joni revisits the ingenue Joni's breakthrough song, in a voice freighted with experience, to skin-prickling effect. A perfect full circle

KATE BUSH

Kate Bush: Flower of the Mountain

By the summer of 1973, 15 year old Catherine Bush has written over 100 songs. By her own admission her voice is, at this point, nothing special, but she has the ability to stay in tune, an affinity with the piano and a burning need to create, and the results are beginning to sound remarkable.

Catherine is the youngest child and only daughter of Kent doctor Robert Bush and his Irish-born wife Hannah. The family live in a rambling East Wickham farmhouse, parts of which date back to the 14th century. The children are raised with a deep awareness of history and fable. John, the eldest son, known to the family as Jay, is 14 years older than Cathy. He is interested in photography and gets his sister to be the subject of many photos taken around the home which, when rediscovered in 1986, will be published as a book. (He is also studying to be a solicitor, though before his sister leaves school he will give up law.) Middle brother Paddy has ambitions in music.

The brothers play folk songs at home and listen to records by King Crimson, Pink Floyd, Peter Green’s Fleetwood Mac and other groundbreaking rock acts of the era. Cathy has been writing poems and composing music at the piano since the age of 11. She absorbs the atmosphere of folk and assays a prog-rock approach to song craft, experimenting with key changes and time signatures, writing lyrics that side-step pop’s obsession with love and sex, which is only to be expected in one so young. She develops her voice through copious writing and, because she’s creating songs with a variety of viewpoints, it's a voice that can mould into character, albeit rooted in her girlish soprano. It becomes clear to the family that she is a natural, a gifted songwriter.

Jay has a friend from Cambridge, Ricky Hopper, who is also impressed by the songs and happens to know David Gilmour of Pink Floyd, he gets a tape of Kate’s work to him. In that summer of 1973, Gilmour visits the family farmhouse and hears more of Kate's songs. "Basically, The Man With The Child In His Eyes just stuck out as a thing of brilliance," Gilmour says today. "I didn't think playing any of those home demos to the people I knew in the recording business would be the way forward for her. So putting her in the studio to make releasable masters was the way to get their attention."

He arranges for her to make a higher quality demo, featuring players from Unicorn, a band he's mentoring. They cut three songs, her high voice and rippling piano playing giving off a distinct air of Joni Mitchell. Then, after making some further solo recordings, Gilmour funds a more elaborate session.

Deciding the songs need strings, he asks another friend from Cambridge, Andrew Powell, to arrange and produce the recordings at AIR studios with The Beatles' engineer Geoff Emerick at the desk. Powell cuts three songs, including Man With The Child In His Eyes - the version that eventually appears on *The Kick Inside* - which Gilmour plays to EMI's A&R chiefs during sessions for Floyd's *Wish You Were Here*.

Gilmour's strategy works. EMI immediately offers Cathy a deal. She is just 16. First she has to sit her final exams and leave school. Then, once the deal is finalised, a long period of development begins.

EMI wants to be sure she can perform live. To bolster her confidence as a performer, and inspired by seeing Lindsey Kemp's dance show *Flowers*, she attends Kenp's drop-in dance and mime classes in Covent Garden, price 50p a session, and begins to develop her body and the expressiveness of her movement in much the same way as she has developed her voice. Towards the end of 1976 she gets involved in a pub-rock act with Paddy and some of his friends. After extensive rehearsals at the farmhouse, The KT Bush Band launches in the spring of 1977 to play covers and a couple of Kate's originals - James And The Cold Gun and Them Heavy People - in pubs and clubs in Lewisham, Tottenham, Putney, Greenford and Brighton. They only play 20 shows over a few months but quickly attract a following on their own terms; it's enough for EMI to see that their new signing can hold a crowd as well as a tune.

In July 1977, sessions for *The Kick Inside* begin with Andrew Powell at the helm and a small band of players featuring former members of fellow EMI acts Pilot and Cockney Rebel. Six weeks later, it's done. Cathy is now Kate Bush, her first musical child is ready to be born, and the life she has known is about to explode.

When I took Wuthering Heights home to meet my family in the winter of 1977 they were all as immediately taken with it as I had been (see *Foreword*). The song was one of those rare hits that pulled together every stripe of music fan. Punks and old jazzers united in their fascination with the song and its singer. Soon my whole family were voting for it on Capital Radio's Hitline, a phone-vote chart broadcast daily at tea time. We were thrilled when it climbed to Number 1 on that list, and felt that we'd played a role in its success. We'd do the same with The Police's Roxanne, a few weeks later. (Which didn't work. It would be a full year before Roxanne was a hit.) But where The Police were full of voguish ambitions - a bit new wave, a bit punk, some reggae, some soul - Kate's song sounded unlike anything else out there.

Wuthering Heights is the ripe fruit of that protracted development process, a song and performance a whole planet away from that of, say, Passing Through Air, (the B-side of Army Dreamers, recorded during the Unicorn session in 1973 when she was only15), which is merely a pleasant pop rocker, with glimmers of Joni and is Kate's nearest equivalent to the folksy-voice-in-rock-setting audible in the early '70s with singers like Sandy Denny, Leslie Duncan and Bridget St. John, but displaying nothing like the verve and acuity of Wuthering Heights: she swallows the end of lines, there's some double-tracking in the choruses, usually a ploy to bolster a weak voice, and little personality in the delivery. The singer of Wuthering Heights is confident, distinctive and powerful, using every tonal tool in her bag, freakishly high or doomily low. As commentators have remarked about her dancing in the early videos - the ad-hoc movements and over-use of the eyes and hands betraying someone who's been to 50p drop-in mime classes - there is, overriding any embarrassing quality, a deep sincerity to the performance, like seeing a child lost in themselves as they react to music, an ingenuous purity mixed with youthful audacity. The ballsy vocal of Wuthering Heights skirts close to being overwrought, but you find yourself rooting for this narrator and her protagonist, you believe in the ghostly woman on the wiley, windy moors, and quickly admire the writer and performer prepared to take this artistic risk.

It exemplifies a balancing act between the sublime and the ridiculous that Kate has perfected throughout her career: there is pretension and self-indulgence – and what valuable art does not include those qualities in some quantity? – but also a naturalness and spontaneity. Some people struggle with her sound, her preoccupations, her way of writing, but if her work does speak to you there is nowhere else to go for that particular thrill.

With her debut single becoming the first British number one written and sung by a woman, Kate's debut album, *The Kick Inside,* can been seen as the work of an artist already on a summit of sorts but not yet at her peak. These are, mostly, songs composed in early adolescence, except Feel It, one assumes, or Moving, dedicated to Lindsey Kemp, or Wuthering Heights, completed shortly before recording started. Those that date back to the ages of 13, 14 and 15, have been adapted and improved as they make their way through the selection and recording process.

Kate, still only 19 when it is released, is fascinated by womanhood. Many songs directly address female experience: for Strange Phenomena she jumps on her menstrual cycle, Room For The Life celebrates the mothering instinct, The Kick Inside takes a more sinister tack, a girl sings a suicide note to the brother who sired her unborn baby. (And what other song can say that?) Kate keeps returning to images of the womb, the foetus and the miracle of reproduction.

Death and visitors from the afterlife are other recurring themes. There are many songs in her canon narrated by spirits, figures watching over a scene or, in the extraordinary case of Breathing (from *Never For Ever),* the POV is that of a reincarnated foetus in its new mother’s womb during a nuclear war – several key Bushian themes employed at once.

The Kick Inside is *jejune* by comparison with what is to come, but certainly not standard-issue adolescent stuff, it is bold enough to hold its own in the time of politically-charged pop, punk and 2-Tone. She may come on like a late-breaking flower-child, but she is being way more adventurous in her choice of subject matter than many of her more trumped-up contemporaries will ever dare.

She is also remarkably business savvy and learns quickly from her mentors and relatives. Her father, a GP, is also a keen mathematician and loves studying contracts and calculating their financial implications. Brother Jay's experience in the law means he is also useful in negotiations. He becomes a frequent presence behind the scenes, acting as everything from driver to de facto manager, though for the first few months of her success, Kate is assigned a manager by EMI. With guidance from David

Gilmour and his manager Steve O’Rourke, Kate and her family set up a holdings company that handles her publishing, and eventually her management, and channels all important decisions through the family board, the final say resting ultimately with Kate herself. The success of Wuthering Heights allows her the kind of autonomy artists usually have to wait many years to achieve.

The impact of *The Kick Inside* is quite profound. It shoots to Number 3 in the charts, staying in the lists for almost 18 months and achieving similar heights all over the world, getting to number 1 in Holland and Portugal and placing high in Australia, France, Brazil, South Afrtica and Scandinavia. There are even releases in places like Uraguay (with a rare alternative sleeve design). As a single, Moving makes Number 1 in Japan. The Man With The Child In His Eyes is another big British hit. Kate finds herself criss-crossing the globe to promote her work and quickly realises this isn't quite what she’d bargained for. Never a particularly keen flyer, she finds the travel gruelling and soon tires of miming on inappropriate TV shows. Despite EMI’s best efforts, and some high-profile TV slots, the album fails to connect in America - as a single, Man With Child In His Eyes stalls at Number 85. But wherever her music does connect, something shifts a little: a young woman is going somewhere fresh and exciting, too early to say where exactly, but you sense she is capable of great things.

But first she has to make a disappointing follow-up album.

Within months EMI are bustling her into the studio. She is still learning what's required of a new star and hasn’t yet worked out how much power she can wield in artistic decisions. From the label’s point of view the next step is a simple one: “More of the same, as soon as possible". But even this basic step is a stretch; the mountain of promotional work is cutting down Kate’s chances to write and develop. She's kept away from her home, her network and her sources of inspiration. Only one song has been written while on the promotional round, Coffee Homeground. Full House and Symphony In Blue come during rare moments of free-time at home. But that's all. The obvious solution is to dip into the stash of already written songs, Wow had been considered for *The Kick Inside*, Don’t Push Your Foot On The Heartbrake and Hammer Horror date from 1976. In The Warm Room and Oh England My Lionheart are much older.

While she is in Japan, her father, brothers and members of the KT Bush band are back home building a studio in the house at Wickham Farm. They start working on the material chosen so far in between promo activities. Kate wants her boys to play on the record but Andrew Powell wants to stick with the winning formula. The band’s demos are tougher and more contemporary than the final record turns out.

Lionheart appears only nine months after *The Kick Inside*, in time for Christmas 1978. It is a paler, less enchanting version of its older sibling, preceded by the embarrassingly flat single, Hammer Horror, which limps to number 44. There is something rather forced about this and the follow-up single, Wow, which comes with a hint of self-parody, admitting the word is already a Kate cliché. In Search Of Peter Pan and Oh England, My Lionheart seem too steeped in bygone Britain for the politically charged climate in 1978. An attempted antidote, Don’t Push You Foot On The Heartbrake, is sung in the kind of unappetising punky gulp Toyah Wilcox makes infamous. Coffee Homeground, a song about a poisoning, sounds like a deranged cabaret singer whose meds are wearing off. There’s nothing on *Lionheart* as shiver-inducing as Wuthering Heights, nothing as forthright as Feel it, nothing as deliciously perplexing as The Kick Inside.

And the sleeve! It is, she admits, something like a men’s mag pose for anyone with a fetish for the cowardly lion from The Wizard Of Oz. It's arresting, granted, but has a similar air of not-quite-getting-it as the music, it all feels a little compromised.

Nonetheless, *Lionheart* sells nearly as well as *The Kick Inside*, and remains on the charts for thritysomething weeks, while Kate undertakes her first major British tour in 1979. *The Tour Of Life*, an ambitious evening of song and dance, wows critics and delights fans. A souvenir live EP, *Kate Bush On Stage*, soars into the top 10. The year ends with a solo Christmas TV special, which expands on the mood of the stage show and features a guest slot by Peter Gabriel.

Kate’s star is high but she is exhausted and realises the baggage that comes with making music will take up all of your time and stamina if you let it. Unhappy with *Lionheart*, she is determined not to make another album that treads water and simply triggers another round of promotional appearances. She resolves to concentrate fully on the music in future and vows that the working method will change.

When *Never For Ever* appears, nearly two years after *Lionheart*, the take-up is enthusiastic enough to make her the first British woman to have a self-written album go to Number 1. Though still dipping into her stockpile of adolescent songs, she's created gripping new material that expands on the thematic promise of *The Kick Inside*, and she's produced the album herself with young engineer Jon Kelly whose production style is fresh and who respects Kate's ideas. (Wuthering Heights was one of his first mixing jobs.)

This time the album has been preceded by two excellent singles. Breathing, five and a half minutes of chilling nuclear paranoia delivered in the innocent voice of an unborn child, is perhaps too radical to be a smash - "Chips of plutonium twinkling in every lung", a spoken middle-8 describing the effects of an atomic bomb and a harrowing closing chorus of "We are all going to die" - but as a calling card for the album to come, highly effective. The follow-up is the eminently accessible Babooshka, a Tolstoy-like short story. The protagonist is an ageing woman, testing her husband's fidelity by pretending to be a woman like her younger self and seducing him with scented letters. The single is promoted with a video featuring Kate in an eye-popping, sexy-Cossack outfit. "People say the Babooshka video is sexy," she tells Phil Sutcliffe of *Sounds*, "but all I can see is that I haven't turned my foot out or fully extended my arm or there's a bit of make-up smudged or you can see there's a gap between my teeth."

Babooshka opens the album with a new, pioneering sound. Powell's strings are out, in comes an atmospheric piano-cum-balalaika, John Giblin's amniotic fretless bass and a raft of curious effects, ghostly voices, endless reverbs, and smashing glasses as percussive punctuation.[4] These last are the first fruits of Kate's recent encounter with the Fairlight CMI, a hugely expensive, tricky-to-operate, computer-driven sampling instrument, which could take a few seconds of sound and tune it across a keyboard, allowing you to turn any noise into a musical instrument or to replicate existing instruments previously unavailable to you. Kate's chum Peter Gabriel is an early adopter and lends her one of only three in the country. Richard Burgess & John Walters of electro-pop band Landscape show her how it works. She's so pleased with its possibilities that, after the sessions wrap, she purchases one for £30,000. "What attracts me to the Fairlight is its

ability to create very human, animal, emotional sounds that don't actually sound like a machine," she tells *Electronics & Music Maker* magazine in 1982. "I think in a way, that's what I've been waiting for."

The symphonic sound isn't completely abandoned. Renowned rock arranger Martyn Ford is brought in to orchestrate the sweetly affecting Blow Away, while lowing cellos on The Infant Kiss bring it some of the drama of The Kick Inside. But the album becomes most engaging when Kate strides furthest from her previous formula, as on Breathing and closing track, Army Dreamers, featuring an Irish country-mouse voice over a gavotte for plucked acoustic guitar, mandolin and a Fairlight violin, interspersed with cocking rifles and a parade sergeant's bellow. Kate summons up a complex emotional tableau with just a few counter-intuitive elements and beckons us inside. This is also a single, though one that fails to connect, but demonstrates that the new iteration of Kate is leading the way into the sonic mood and techniques that will shape the musical decade ahead.

Just before Army Dreamers is released, Kate speaks to Kris Needs of Zig Zag magazine (August 1980), about her reaction to *Never For Ever* going straight to Number 1.

"I can't believe it, still. Every time I tell someone I feel like I'm lying. This album is a new step for me. The other two albums are so far away that they're not true. They really aren't me anymore.

"I'd really like to be able to leave myself open to any form of music. I could do funk tracks on the next album, I could do classical, I could do bossa novas. I think it's best to stay as open as you can. As a person I'm changing all the time, and the first album is very much like a diary of me at that time – this one is like starting again. It's like the first album on a new level. It's much more under control."

Needs rates Breathing as Kate's best work to date and she agrees. They also discuss the treacherous lyrical terrain of The Infant Kiss, in which a woman finds herself disturbed by thoughts of the man-in-waiting as she kisses a little boy goodnight, The Child With The Man In His Eyes, if you like. She has told *Sounds* that the song is loosely based upon *The Innocents*, a film version of Henry James's *Turn Of The Screw:* "I was imagining that moment of the nanny giving him a little peck goodnight and he gives her a great big adult kiss back. The emotional tearing inside her. There's a psychotic man inside this innocent child, a demon, and that's who this

straight woman is feeling attracted to. It’s such a horrific, distorted idea it’s really quite beautiful.”

To *ZigZag* she reveals she’d already begun work on her next album, is enjoying playing with rhythm boxes, synthesisers and delays, and appreciating the “time to breathe.”

Despite *Never For Ever*'s success, either she or EMI feel she may need a "proper" producer for the next album. Tony Visconti, famous for his work with David Bowie and T. Rex, sends her a fan letter after hearing *Lionheart*. She asks to see him. At their meeting he sits behind her while she plays the demos standing at a mixing desk. He will later recall being rather distracted by her bum waving in front of him all through the playback. He is up for the job but she eventually calls to say something along the lines of, "I'm not going to use a producer, but if I were it would be you."

Putting herself in charge, Kate creates her first masterpiece. But it will be arduous.

The songs, all new, at last, come fairly quickly. Sat In Your Lap is inspired by seeing a Stevie Wonder show with her boyfriend and bass player, Del Palmer. Kate writes it the following day, and about 19 other songs follow over the next few weeks.

She starts the recording process by working with engineer Hugh Padgham, man behind the admired ‘80s gated-snare drum sound, who's in high demand recording hits for Peter Gabriel, Phil Collins and Genesis. They cut Sat In Your Lap and a few other tracks during a three week session. Padgham is too busy (and, he'll later admit, too unimpressed by the music) to get heavily involved in long, complex sessions chasing the unknown with Kate, so he hands the job to his former assistant, Paul Hardiman.

When Sat In Your Lap is complete it is, bizarrely, released as a single, a whole year before the album is ready. Not an obvious single, but terrific anyway; with it’s pounding 5/4 piano, beefy sound and unsettling video, it makes listeners wonder what on earth Kate is up to in there.

By the time the 10 track album is complete, she has been recording solidly for twelve months. Fifteen-hour days are commonplace, fuelled by cigarettes, chocolate, tea and takeaways, often just her, Hardiman and Palmer together in a basement studio. She uses the Fairlight extensively to play instruments she’s never used before. She calls in session musicians, but often removes their contributions later, slowly moulding and remoulding the tracks into the dense, enigmatic things they became. It is fastidious,

draining work and she makes herself ill doing it, but when it is finished she is justly proud of the most personal work she has ever done.

"*The Dreaming* is very different from my first two records," she tells Richard Cook of the NME. "The essence of what I am playing has been there from the start, it's just that the expression has been changing. What I'm doing now is what I was trying to do four years ago [on *Never For Ever*]."

The Dreaming is modern, progressive, distinctive and rich with ideas. Compared to her previous albums it is also a flop. Released in September 1982, it manages to sell about 60,000 copies in its scant ten weeks on the chart. The singles after Sat In Your Lap fail to click.

In fact, the album's apparent non-commerciality is flagged soon after its completion. EMI comes close to rejecting the album altogether - until new executive David Munns steps in and demands that the artist has her way (he's remained a trusted mentor ever since) - so perhaps the label's promotion is half-hearted, but even so it seems the public isn't quite ready for New Kate. If she is stung by the cool reception, it doesn't shake her resolve to follow her own path, "I have to create time to write now," she tells the NME. "I don't stop working. I haven't really stopped since I've begun. If this album hadn't sold well I'd still carry on in this direction. If I make a record which I didn't much like and it sold, well, I'd still want to change the direction. When you're making an expression of yourself you have to be happy with it. To do it and keep getting better. That's so hard."

Time has altered perception of *The Dreaming;* understandably, as it is a dense, multi-leaved thing that takes a while to assess. It teems with obstacles to instant assimilation: a song in 5/4, another sung in a cockney accent, another in a broad, comical Australian, and then answering machines, didgeridoos and donkeys. Pull Out The Pin is set in the moment a Vietnamese soldier decides to kill an American. Houdini finds the escapologist's wife believing he's contacting her from the afterlife. All The Love ends with a parade of people saying "Goodbye" down the phone. The music swerves from polka to caustic rock to Irish jigs. *The Dreaming* is a collection of peculiar artistic decisions, yet many fans consider it the finest distillation of Essence of Bush; deep, eccentric, and adventurous, a book of bizarrely beautiful short stories.

After allowing herself six months to decompress from the intensity of *The Dreaming*'s birth, Kate gets down to addressing the future. She rethinks the way she has been working. A year of almost constant studio time,

flitting between venues and engineers has been both exhausting and expensive; she considers that in future it would make sense to have a room of her own, so she resolves to build herself a proper master-quality studio and vows to give herself a healthier lifestyle: more dance classes, less takeaways. She also decides to move out of London. She and Del relocate to a 17th-century farmhouse cottage in the Kent countryside.

When that is done she settles down to work on what will become her most successful album of all, *Hounds Of Love*.

Refreshed by her new surroundings, she begins to generate new music quickly. When ideas strike she can catch them at home, then return to her parents' place to the new studio in the barn. Del is learning to operate all the equipment, so the couple become a self-sufficient unit. Using a Linn drum machine and the Fairlight, Del programmes drum patterns. The demos they prepare in the cottage are immediately sunnier than the songs on *The Dreaming*. One of the first things they try is A Deal With God, written in one evening in 1983, its distinctive Fairlight fanfare with Del's rumbling drum program in place from the beginning. This will, years later, alert the world to the reborn Kate Bush as the album's first single, retitled Running Up That Hill.

Another early song is Hounds Of Love itself, inspired by a favourite film, *Night Of the Demon*, which includes the line of dialogue, "It's in the trees, it's coming" spoken by Maurice Denham. The third song she writes is And Dream Of Sheep.

"Once I wrote that, that was it, that was the beginning of what became the concept," Kate tells Radio 1's *Classic Albums* programme in 1992. "From the beginning, The Ninth Wave was a film, that's how I thought of it, the idea of this person being in the water, how they've got there, we don't know. But the idea is that they've been on a ship and they've been washed over the side so they're alone in this water. And I find that horrific imagery, the thought of being completely alone in all this water. And they've got a life jacket with a little light so that if anyone should be traveling at night they'll see the light and know they're there. And they're absolutely terrified, and they're completely alone at the mercy of their imagination, which again I personally find such a terrifying thing, the power of one's own imagination being let loose on something like that. And the idea that they've got it in their head that they mustn't fall asleep, because if you fall asleep when you're in the water, I've heard that you roll over and drown, so they're trying to keep themselves awake."[5]

As musicians come in to play on the tracks they are struck by the constant coming and going of family members to hang out, drink tea or, in the case of Paddy, play on the sessions. And of course Del is deeply involved, programming, engineering and providing a permanent sounding

board. Kate is supremely relaxed in these conditions and the music reflects the creative freedom.

Speaking to *Keyboard* magazine in 1985 she says of *The Dreaming*: “Nearly all those songs are saying that people are great, but they really hurt each other, and you know, look at the things we do to each other. Why do we do this...you know, questioning.” *Hounds Of Love* seems more about the benefits of deep relationships. Running Up That Hill wonders what it would be like if lovers could swap lives, spend some time in each other’s skins. Cloudbusting considers the love of a boy for his vilified father, based on Peter Reich’s *The Book Of Dreams* in which he recalled, with great fondness, wild childhood days with the eccentric scientist Wilhelm Reich, while Mother Stands For Comfort is sung from the point of view of a transgressor who knows his mother will protect him: “Mother will hide the murderer.” And The Ninth Wave sees a woman look back over her life, at one point imagining the people she loves in a world without her, at another imagining her future self imploring her to stay alive. Kate says it it’s inspired by “my worst nightmares”.

For all the facility of the writing, though, the recording takes as long as *The Dreaming*.

“I was never so pleased to finish anything in my life,” Kate tells the BBC in 1992. “There were times I never thought it would be finished. It was just such a lot of work, you know, the lyrics, trying to piece the thing together. But I did love it, I did enjoy it and everyone that worked on the album was wonderful. And it was, in some ways, the happiest I've been writing and making an album. And I know there's a theory that goes round that you must suffer for your art, [but] I don't believe this, because I think in some ways this is the most complete work that I've done, in some ways it is the best and I was the happiest that I'd been compared to making other albums.”

It shows. Running Up the Hill is the most joyous, danceable single yet. Hounds Of Love, Big Sky and Cloudbusting aren't far behind. The latter comes with a bold, mini movie as its video, starring Donald Sutherland as Wilhelm Reich and Kate, in a choppy wig, as his son. Unlike *The Dreaming*, where the artistic quest had trumped commerciality, *Hounds Of Love* proves conclusively that Kate can make superb pop singles that also deliver on originality; then, stretch out and nail that most unfashionable

form, the extended song-cycle. In this way, Kate has her cake and eats it too.

In interview she says, “I think it’s fabulous that people still remember me.” It has been only three years since her previous album, but it seems long enough in pop music to feel utterly forgotten. For all her gifts, during her time away from the spotlight she isn't considered part of the pop aristocracy who are wheeled out for Band Aid, Live Aid and the like. It clearly doesn't occur to Bob Geldof to ask her to join in, so low is her star post *The Dreaming*. But it works in her favour; because she doesn't suffer from the ubiquity of her fellow pop stars, her new work feels fresher, more individual, less a part of the decade's consensus on what a pop record should be. You can tell that Kate is her own A&R department, and her contemporaries are envious.

Some of the interviews surrounding the record require her to refute tabloid gossip that she's emigrated to France, swelled to 18 stone or spent months in rehab. It's odd that if someone declines to join in the red carpeted capers of celebrity they are assumed to be mad or damaged. Just because she's reluctant to talk between albums doesn't mean she is automatically a hermit, but that is the implication. All Kate demands is a degree of normality in which to make her music. Keeping the idiocy of stardom at bay *stops* her from being mad or damaged.

As each of the excellent singles appear, more and more buyers discover the album. It's a huge commercial and critical success. Kate effectively crosses over from the ‘eccentric pop anomaly’ category to that of revered rock stateswoman, still a class of her own.

A year later, I find myself in a meeting at Stiff records discussing who should produce my band’s debut album. I don’t hesitate. “Kate Bush!” I say. There are a few coughs and raised eyebrows, some from the band. “That’s a weird idea,” says head of the label Dave Robinson. “She’d never do it. And we couldn’t afford her. But if she did…” he jots a note down. We never hear any more about it.

Funnily enough, we probably aren’t the only ones. Kate mentions in contemporary interviews that several people have asked her to produce their records but she is too nervous to do it, the responsibility for someone else’s music feels too great. Besides, she doesn't really have the time. Still, as her cachet in the industry rises stratospherically after *Hounds Of Love* there are

some useful side-effects. “EMI left me alone from that point,” she tells Mojo in 2005. “It shut them up.”

Early in 1987, Kate is commissioned to write a song for a movie. John Hughes's *She's Having A Baby* was no masterpiece, but the song Kate delivers is. Hughes wants something for a scene where the hero is facing up to himself while his wife endures a difficult birth, it's the moment where the rom-com darkens. Kate gives him This Woman's Work.

She's written it fairly quickly, using the script as the spur. She's often been inspired by movies and TV shows, so this is safe territory. The song is so good she knows it's also the starting point for her next record.

But things almost immediately grind to a halt. For whatever reason, the writing comes hard. Kate feels blocked. Maybe it's the natural pressure of following the biggest record of her career, maybe it is simply reluctance to step into another exhausting year of recording. (Make that two. Love And Anger, the next song she is happy with, is still 'unfinished' when the album is released in October 1989.)

Obstacles seems to appear at every turn. Having the idea to set a small section of Molly Bloom's soliloquy from Ulysses to music, she constructs Flower Of The Mountain, with it's repeated whisper of "Yes." When she approaches James Joyce's estate for permission to use the words, the response is a resounding "No." And that's after a year's consultation.

She shouldn't be surprised. Joyce's estate is, at this point, particularly touchy about the use of the material they oversee, and a pop song isn't high on their list of priorities. But it's an irksome set-back; with plans underway to shoot a video for the song, it's an eleventh hour slap in the face. She has to rewrite the lyric, using the passage as inspiration for its tone. In the update she skirts very close to the original in places. Joyce's people can't stop her borrowing the odd phrase - she says 'flower of the mountains' instead of 'mountain' - or giving the music an Irish feel, nor can they copyright repeated use of the word "yes". Reworked as The Sensual World, the song is still superb, but Kate feels it should have been better, different. It is a mood that somehow falls across the whole record and, eventually, transmits itself to listeners.

The Sensual World is not a bad album. But it's no *Hounds Of Love* or *The Dreaming.* It's full of solid ideas, beautifully sung and recorded, but

manages to sound, by her high standards, both underwritten and overworked, stodgy and hard to actually love.

Love And Anger has a verse melody that sounds very similar to the "yay yay oh" section of Cloudbusting and is obviously reaching towards that song's euphoric drive, but its chorus doesn't connect, it is difficult to understand what she's getting at, and the track is awfully busy, with its clackety bassline, pattering drums, massed vocals and, for good measure, David Gilmour having a bluesy blow at the last minute. It has the feel of the climactic moment from an '80s movie, everything thrown at the final shot, helicopters, crowds and explosions. Kate's laugh at the end may as well be over the absurdity of it all.

Reaching Out is another blustery song that seems to swap scale for emotional clout. For all Kate's tremulous stuff in the verses about babies and flowers, that delicacy is trampled in the chorus by the massive drums and her voice, drenched in expensive reverb, struggling to connect.

Heads We're Dancing is supposedly about a woman dancing with Hitler at a party, which even for Kate seems a tall order to make into an appealing song, and once again the track is crawling with complex bass grooves (the late, great Mick Karn) meshed guitar tracks and egregious detail.

Rocket's Tail starts beautifully with Kate combining with the supernatural voices of The Trio Bulgarka, whom she courts on a trip to Bulgaria with noted produced Joe Boyd, and who are also on Deeper Understanding and the liquid and affecting Never Be Mine. But the unnerving beauty of their union is undermined by a sudden rock rhythm section in full pomp, with Gilmour once again sounding miscast. Deeper Understanding is another potentially fine song spoilt by a chorus where Kate is rendered almost inaudible.

When the starkly arranged, unambiguous beauty of This Woman's Work crops up at the end it's a relief and you can't help thinking that ten of these, Kate alone at the piano, would have constituted a record to treasure rather than all the huffing and puffing you've just experienced. Four years in the making, *The Sensual World* could be said to be two great songs bookending eight over-egged near-misses. Even the most generous assessment might have to admit that *The Sensual World* is to *Hounds Of Love* what *Lionheart* had been to *The Kick Inside*.

It fares well commercially, selling over a million in Britain, but with an air disappointment around it - the singles perform poorly compared to those from *Hounds Of Love*. Kate's finger isn't as assuredly on the pulse as it was.

Soon after the album appears, she suffers two devastating losses, guitarist Alan "Murph" Murphy (his last appearance with Kate is on her cover of Elton John's Rocket Man recorded in June 1989 but not released until November 1991) and dancer Gary Hurst, both dying from complications arising from AIDS. When she does interviews for the eight-disc retrospective box, *This Woman's Work*, released in October 1990, she comments that their deaths mark the end of an era and she has been taking time off to think things over.

During this time of reflectIon she decides to go back to the piano. On her next album, instead of sculpting dense tracks around the Fairlight and a drum program, she vows to have songs more fully realised before she enters the studio, to hopefully avoid becoming bogged down in the material once again. She even talks about bashing an album down and going out on the road.

But it doesn't work out that way. Simple, affecting demos recorded in the summer of 1990 begin to gain weight, complexity, and guest stars. One song, Why Should I Love You, becomes, over many months, an awkward summit between Kate, The Trio Bulgarka, Prince and Lenny Henry. Whether it is failure of nerve about the material, an inability to spot when something is finished or the pressure of events in her private life, it seems yet another album will take a long, long time.

With Alan Murphy gone, a new guitarist is brought in. Danny McIntosh is known in the wider circle of Kate’s players. According to KT Bush Band member Brian Bath, McIntosh had taught Murphy how to play. Now he does the same for Kate; her appearance as a guitarist on Big Stripey Lie comes after lessons from Danny. Regular players John Giblin and Charlie Morgan are also drafted in, primarily to help develop the material in jam sessions, but the atmosphere isn't quite as relaxed as usual.

One major issue haunting the work is the poor health of Kate's mother. Hannah Bush finally succumbs to cancer on Valentine’s Day 1992. Naturally, it is a devastating blow. Kate is unable to function for months.

“Usually, 1 can pull myself through things like feeling low or having problems, by working,” Kate tells *Vox* magazine when *The Red Shoes* is released in 1993. “But I have been at points where I just couldn't work. I couldn't possibly sing - it was beyond me, it just hurt too much.

"The biggest thing on this album is that I lost my mother. It's something I couldn't possibly express in music, and yet it is being expressed through very subliminal things, like the quality of some of the performances. I couldn't work for months, I couldn't go near the whole process.”

Hannah’s absence alters the dynamic in the work at Wickham Farm for everybody. Her warmth, encouragement and frequent appearances at the door with tea and cake had been one of the great pleasures of recording there.

Kate’s bereavement not only halts the work but forces her to take stock of her life, which impacts most notably upon her long romantic relationship with Del Palmer, who has been with her in and out of the studio since the very beginning. Though they will continue to work closely together - Del remains her principal engineer - their time as a couple quietly ends after 15 years.

Lily, inspired by her therapist Lily Cornford, includes the line, “life has blown a great big hole through me”. In his excellent biography of Kate, Graeme Thomson points out that the lyrics throughout *The Red Shoes* are full of questions, full of doubt. “This is the album,” he says, “where Bush does not bounce back.”

But one song takes the grain of grief and turns it into a pearl. Moments Of Pleasure threads together some random episodes of happiness and concludes with shout-outs to departed friends, among them Alan Murphy, Bill Duffield the lighting assistant who died on the 1979 tour (and to whom Blow Away on *Never For Ever* was dedicated) and Michael Pressburger, esteemed British director of the film *The Red Shoes* - the inspiration for the song - whom Kate befriends shortly before his death. Though this is a very personal list, the glimpses into Kate's everyday reality, such as the sweet banality of "spinning in the chair in Abbey Road", become moving when set to this yearning melody. It's only in the refrain that Kate undermines the positivity of her memories, the line "Just being alive, it can really hurt" is sung in a howl of anguish.

Against common sense, Kate finishes this difficult record and launches herself straight into another taxing project, a long-form video, *The Line, The Cross and The Curve*, linking six songs from the album, which she opts to direct herself. Loosely based on the story of Pressburger’s original movie, Kate casts Miranda Richardson in the role of the cursed dancer and also finds a role for her old movement mentor Lindsey Kemp. There are sequences that are arresting, but they’re mostly Kate performing a good song, the dramatic elements and linking material are less successful and Kate's acting is, at best, flat. *The Line, The Cross and The Curve* doesn’t live up to its ambitious promise, looking stilted, confused and, in places,

woefully amateurish - a shame, as this kind of film project is something Kate has talked about for ages. Although it is shown in cinemas and will be issued on video, it is generally deemed a noble failure. Not least by Kate herself, who soon dubs it “a load of bollocks” in interview. It has never been reissued on DVD, but is viewable on YouTube.

If there’s a silver lining in this time of cloud, it is Kate's new relationship. She is soon being linked with Danny McIntosh, her guitar teacher and player, a man who friends speak of as a delightfully benign presence, with a very infectious humour and energy.

The next few years of Kate’s life are musically uneventful and have remained very private. She barely speaks of this period in interview. She settles in with Danny, and in 1998 they have a son, Albert - known as Bertie - but the world outside is not told. Famously, it is Peter Gabriel who, in 2003, lets slip in a interview, when asked what’s become of her, that Kate is now a mother, effectively breaking the news in the media.

By the time of Gabriel's gaffe, she is actually deep into her next album, *Aerial*. King Of the Mountain is the first song recorded, around 1996, the guide vocal she sings on the demo making it to the final record. About two years go by before she records anything else, An Architect's Dream comes to her during her pregnancy.

Once Bertie is born, the family moves to Berkshire. A new studio is built there. All of that takes up further time. But most of it is, naturally, devoted to parenthood. Kate and Dan bring up Bertie without the aid of nannies. Recording new material doesn't begin in earnest until Bertie starts school. Del is still on hand to capture the ideas and provide the kind of feedback that Kate trusts. Dan is a prominent player on the album too, bringing some stylistic twists that haven't graced her records before, like the rousing flamenco drive of Sunset and the skanking lope of King Of the Mountain.[6]

By the time *Aerial* is completed it has become a thing of two halves, "The Great Danes of Love" Kate jokes in interview, as it shares *Hounds Of Love*'s shape but is twice the size: a whole album of distinct songs under the title A Sea Of Honey. and a whole album taken up by a narrative thread, divided into nine sections, under the title A Sky Of Honey.

When word gets out late in 2004 that Kate is about to break her 12 year silence, there is understandable pandemonium in the fanbase, but a whole lot of cogitation and column inches in the mainstream media too. People who have grown up with her music and never had an opportunity to write about her are now in editorial positions on the broadsheets. The anticipation becomes so breathless it feels almost as if Jesus Christ has mentioned he's popping back after Christmas.

I'm commissioned to write a review for *MOJO* magazine. In the time since *The Red Shoes'* release in 1993, the digital age has truly arrived. The World Wide Web is also released in 1993. Following Napster's explosion in 1999, the music business's paranoia about piracy becomes intense, while it fails to swiftly recalibrate itself for the digital age. All it can do is try to keep people away from the product until the moment of release. I'm required to travel to EMI's London offices and sign a form saying I won't break an embargo on information. I must listen to the album on headphones

while Kate's press officer sits with me in the room so that I am not tempted to record any of it. It's not an ideal way to review anything, but luckily the music is transportive enough to overcome this awkward introduction.

My review calls it a masterpiece. *Aerial* is not flawless., however, but where *The Sensual World* and *The Red Shoes* might be considered spotty collections with flashes of great beauty, *Aerial* is less vertiginous in its highs and lows, and is more consistently successful in the manner of *Hounds Of Love*.

It's all exquisitely sung, played and judged. Any louche qualities are more Noel Coward than Velvet Underground, any grandiosity more Elgar than Genesis. Her trademark misty Britishness is present, stirring some long-dormant musical sense of heritage, but *Aerial* is neither prog-rock, nor Brit-pop, nor folk music; it is pure Kate in all her wonky splendour, invoking parquet floors, washing lines and skylarks, Brief Encounter on Sunday afternoon telly, wood pigeons and crumpets. There's something slightly fusty about it, something arcane glimpsed through a leaded window, but also something bizarrely *avant garde*, refreshingly out of step with the booty-proffering Noughties. *Aerial* is as curious and colloquial as Battenberg cake.

The Sea Of Honey flows in on King Of the Mountain, in which Kate, in a quivering voice, wonders if Elvis - for it is he - is still alive in some snowbound realm where mysteries dwell, sledging down a mountainside on Kane's Rosebud. The drums arrive late and loud. King Of The Mountain suggests that *Aerial* will be pleasingly spare. Indeed it is, much of it simply piano with orbiting atmospherics.

Track two is called π. The refrain goes: "3.141592635897932…." π to 112 decimal places. Track three is Bertie – arranged as a sort of gavotte - a touching tribute to Kate's seven year old son. (Early leaked track listings identify the song as Lovely Bertie.)

Mrs. Bartoloszzi is one of Kate's signature portrait songs, its central figure a woman duty-bound to clean a house, who slips into a reverie over a new washing machine. In interviews Kate admits this one might not have occurred to her before she became a wife and mother.

How To Be Invisible has a possible hint of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, describing a secret recipe for not being seen. (It involves a pinch of keyhole, eye of Braille and hem of anorak.) Spooky backing vocals resemble wind whistling through a '30s Hollywood soundtrack.

Joanni appears to be a foot-soldier's love song to Joan of Arc and features a serene string arrangement by the late Michael Kamen, one of his last assignments in October 2003.

Anyone who has sat transfixed by This Woman's Work or Moments Of Pleasure will shudder with bittersweet trepidation as they hear the opening chords to A Coral Room, ushering in Kate's uncanny gift for reporting from the emotion-boggling frontier where love and grief embrace. So few artists go there. Or, more precisely, take you there. This is the first work to be directly related to the passing of her mother. The "little brown jug" belonged to Hannah, the musical quote is from the Glenn Miller tune of that name popular when Hannah was young.

When veteran British songwriter Don Black meets Kate Bush for the first time in 1996, he asks if she has a favourite singer. "The blackbird," she replies. "And my second favourite is the thrush." Birdsong is clearly an inspiration for the second half of *Aerial.* (When the album appears on iTunes in 2010 it has become one giant 42 minute track named after the closing instrumental passage: An Endless Sky Of Honey.)

Two lovers meet in the afternoon, a painter (God?) is painting the skyline, a sudden shower causes his colours to run, forming a sunset. At dusk, the lovers come together "at the top of the highest hill" and, once night has fallen, go skinny dipping in the ocean. The following morning they rise from their bed and go up onto the roof to welcome a new day and their new selves.

It's a simple metaphor that carries endless scope for metaphysical poetry, while the natural slowness of the action suits an extended, gently evolving work.

"We're gonna be laughing about this…" Kate begins. She tells us it's gonna be good. "Can you see the lark ascending?" she asks.

With a little help from her friends, Kate and her piano pan across 360 degrees of the sensual world. Dan's guitars provide unexpected flavours, Danny Thompson's double bass purrs. Procol Harum's Gary Booker proves a perfect vocal foil on the stirring crepuscular section. (The cameo from Rolf Harris as "The Painter", which only seemed corny when the album came out, feels unfortunate now.) Stirring in bursts of jazz, flamenco, some wood pigeons, the voice of Bertie and the orchestra, Kate distills 24 hours of light, sound, love, song and landscape into one heady draught.

The wave form of a blackbird’s song is the focal point of the album’s sleeve, resembling islands on the skyline at dawn, itself an illustration of the track’s climactic moment: “It came up on the horizon /Rising and rising/In a sea of honey, a sky of honey”, a boldly cacophonous choir entering on the word “horizon”.

The jewel on the sundial’s gnomon is Kate herself, every aspect of her is caught during the day, lover, mother, visionary, artist, naturalist, poet. As the final instrumental section hits high noon, we’re flooded in all that refracted sunlight.

“It was a very conscious decision, with this record, that I didn't write through a computer,” she tells Radio 4’s Front Row on the eve of its release. “A lot of my friends write on computers so every time they hit a chorus, you just have a repeat of the same chorus. For me that's not art, because it should be something that is evolving and developing, as you move through a song, not just repetition of the same moments. What’s so exciting about music is it is something that unfolds through the process of time, that's what music is, if people get it right you'll be whipped up into a trance frenzy or a state of prayer. Music is something very special and emotive, and it's become very disposable.”

Interviewer John Wilson asks if she is a perfectionist.

“I'm very opinionated.” she says. “I'm horrible to work with, I'm so fussy and picky and... I think what's good is that I know what I want. Actually that's the most important thing.

“I've always tried to be adventurous, and I think one of my faults is that I have a tendency to overdo things. And what was good about taking a gap after the last record was, I had a chance to actually sit back and think about what were the things that I felt I kept getting wrong, that I wanted to try and sort out. Because one of the common problems with human beings, generally, is you tend to keep making the same mistakes again and again. I wanted to make a record that had much more space in it. And I also wanted to stand in the role of narrator, much more, rather than it being the person inside the song. I wanted to stand outside and talk about situations outside of myself. Part of that process was also to not have very many backing vocals, to have a greater sense of one voice telling the story.”

Aerial has taken six years to complete. Once again, Kate expresses great relief at a project’s end. “I was so relieved when I finished this record. I thought I was never going to get it finished. There were many times I

thought I was just not going to have the energy to see it through. It was really hard work. I always tend to do things that are bit overambitious, really!”

There is silence again until 2010. To a murmur of bafflement and surprise, Kate announces that, for the past two years she has been revisiting some of the key songs from *The Sensual World* and *The Red Shoes* and doing them the way she felt she ought to have done them all along. Allowing for the subsequent changes in her voice, she has shifted keys, removed sweetening strings, extraneous detail or dated drums, invited musicians in to add new parts, and mixed out some old performances.

She calls the album *Director's Cut*, as if she hadn't had full control over the material the first time around. It is generally well received, though one or two fans grumble that the best songs weren't the ones that needed attention. Some are shocked by the changes. Flicking through it to see what she has done to your favourite song isn't the way to approach it. *Directors Cut* has to be absorbed as one complete work. as if this is an album you missed out on. Then it works.

Moments Of Pleasure sounds as if it has been completely replayed. This version is slower and over a minute longer. There are no strings, the "Just being alive" choruses have been replaced with humming, and Maureen and Bill have dropped from the roll call of absent friends at the end. (Supposedly because Kate loses count and doesn't play for long enough when laying down the backing track. This is the kind of error easily fixed in digital recording, but she is using tape.)

With this album Kate joins a short list of people with such lengthy careers that they are able to readdress the work of their distant youth. Compared to Joni Mitchell's revisiting of her songs on the *Travelogue* and *Both Sides Now* albums, Kate's efforts appear a little tentative. Joni takes full advantage of the changes in her vocal tone and (re)sings the songs like a *grande dame*, freighting a girl's words with experience. Both Sides, Now itself takes on a whole new weight when you know she really has observed life from *every* direction.

At first listen to *Director's Cut*, Kate seems merely to be tidying things up, removing any fussiness and chintz from the arrangements and giving the songs some breathing space, rather than bringing her older self to the performances. But repeated plays show that these subtle differences are how she chooses to represent the wisdom of age. She doesn't have the nicotine-

wrecked gravitas of Joni's elder tone to play with, so she spring cleans the room around her voice and throws the windows open.

This Woman's Work, doubled in length and played on a tremeloed electric piano, is now sounding faintly sinister, Rubberband Girl is recast as something from the Stones' *Exile On Main Street.* If you can shake off your memories of the originals, this album is fascinating.

After just one album in 18 years, suddenly two come at once. Six months on from *Director's Cut*, she issues what appears to be a Christmassy concept album, dedicated to a single topic: snow.

But frozen precipitation is merely the starting point to *50 Words For Snow*, though the music is indeed snow-like, drifting up against your window and taking its sweet time to settle: seven songs in 65 minutes, one of them, Misty, a nippy 13 minutes long. Kate, the former sprite-child with a recording contract, is audibly slowing down. Though she has approached all her work from a unique perspective, resolutely romantic - always more Bloomsbury group than rock group - on this album she writes with all the ellipsis and elision of a New Yorker story, singing of a ghostly Victorian woman rising out of Lake Tahoe, sightings of the yeti, a couple who have passed through one another's lives for centuries and a band of angels surrounding someone who is "in and out of doubt". This is a theme – otherworldly souls in desolate landscapes - she's been exploring since Kathy's chilly manifestation in Wuthering Heights. Way back in 1980, Kate had told *ZigZag* magazine about her belief in extra-sensory perception. "I do believe in spirits, and I also believe that people communicate by much more than word of mouth. There are people like beacons sitting on top of hills. You must have some friends that you can just feel calling you some days. They're just saying 'Help!' and you pick it up."

Sonically, *50 Words For Snow*, comes across like a wintry companion to *Aerial* 's summer garden, though the melodies are perhaps less dynamic than usual. No use for playing at parties, as background music or to drive to, the first few songs, achingly slow and deliberately haunting, are the most challenging. Snowflake - a duet with Bertie, now 13 - is just piano, a heartbeat drum pulse and a billowing whisper of orchestration. Bertie begins by singing: "I was born in a cloud." Kate sings the refrain as softly as possible: 'The world is so loud. Keep falling. I'll find you."

Lake Tahoe, opens as an operatic duet between Stefan Roberts and Michael Wood with Kate playing something close to a classical piano part, Snowflake is now the name of a missing pet, possibly drowned.

Misty, concerns a one-night stand with a snowman: "I feel you melt in my hands." Danny Thompson makes a welcome guest appearance. Steve

Gadd drums. Kate’s piano begins to swing.

Things pick up pace slightly for Wild Man, the single, which starts off a little like Sensual World. This is the one about the yeti. On the choruses Kate’s joined by Andy Fairweather-Low, an unexpectedly effective choice, his high, congested voice perfectly apt for some Nepalese mountain dweller singing “While crossing the Lhakpa-La, something jumped down from the rocks.” As you do.

Next guest along is Elton John, who, for once, is required to not chew up the text and to sing a rather stately melody, and he makes a fine job of it. Snowed In At Wheeler Street is a duet between two souls who have loved each other throughout history but are always being parted by circumstance: “Have we been in love forever?” “I don’t want to lose you again.”

The title song is the liveliest and slightest. It features a cameo from the inescapable Stephen Fry. He delivers the 50 Words For Snow – mostly inventions like *swans-a-melting, deamondi-pavlova, eiderfalls (*and several adjectives, which is cheating) - as Viv Stanshall might have, as in Mike Oldfield’s *Tubular Bells.*

Finally, in Among Angels, we’re back to Kate alone at the piano and winged spirits are on hand to assist: “Rest your weary world in their hands/Lay your broken laugh at their feet.”

At the very least, like snowfall, this album lifts the heart and transforms your world for as long as it’s around.

Ann Powers, music critic of US radio network NPR says of the album: “The music is immersive but spacious, jazz-tinged and lushly electronic. This time around, drummer Steve Gadd is her most important interlocutor – the veteran studio player's gentle but firm touch draws the frame around each of her expanding landscapes. But Bush won't be restricted. Like [Joni] Mitchell on *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter*, she takes her time and lets her characters lead."

Promoting it, Kate speaks to Tom Doyle at *MOJO* magazine. When asked the perennial question about whether she’d ever appear live again she says: "Maybe I will do some shows some day. I'd like to think so before I get too ancient.”

As it turns out, we don't have to wait too long.

“In March of 2013 I said to Bertie, ‘Shall we do some live shows?’ He said, ‘Yes, absolutely!’”

So begin Kate’s programme notes for *Before The Dawn*, the show she performs over 22 nights between August 31 and October 1, 2014.

It is a curious opening, the assertion that Bertie, her 16-year-old son, is her new artistic mentor, holding the casting vote on whether his 55-year-old mother might make her return to the live stage.

“Without Bertie this would never have happened. Without his encouragement and enthusiasm …I’m sure I would have backed out. Throughout he has been my chief consultant, my editor, my confidant.

“I really wanted to do something different from working on another album,” she continues, “and felt a real desire to have contact with the audience that still liked my work.”

From that first conversation to opening night takes 18 months of “flat out work”. It won’t be a mere gig, but a chance to finally realise the potential of two extended pieces in her catalogue, The Ninth Wave and The Sky of Honey. Being Kate she can call upon anyone she likes to help her achieve it. She feels there are two key roles she wants to fill: the drummer and the lighting designer. “I saw this as being a journey of light visually and the drummer being the ‘heart’ audially (*sic*).” she says in the notes. Theatre lighting designer Mark Henderson is her first choice, he readily agrees and suggests celebrated set designer Dick Bird. To help with dialogue Kate contacts novelist David Mitchell (*Ghostwritten, Cloud Atlas* etc.) and to help with the staging, former artistic director of the RSC Adrian Noble. Her vital drummer is the great Omar Hakim. John Giblin, first heard on *Never For Ever* is in place on bass, and keyboard, accordion and pipe player Kevin McAlea provides the lone connection with the cast of the *Tour of Life*, Kate’s 1979 show. This stellar team begins to pull the concept together.

Taking over an abandoned school, they set up simultaneous workshops in different areas of the building; puppetry, movement, vocals and lighting ideas are explored in various spaces while band rehearsals take place in the assembly hall.

The show is credited to The KT Fellowship (the K and T combined into one letter).

Pundits calculate she could make more money from these shows than she might from a new record. Though she has never given the impression she's remotely motivated by money - and indeed has noted in interview that she could have been much richer, if she'd made albums more frequently, accepted offers to tour and allowed use of her music in advertising - perhaps Kate realises that, in the 21st century, taking many years to craft records may not be the most effective use of one's time. (The fact that the live shows reboot sales of all her albums, now on her own label - at least eight of them re-enter the Top 40 - is a terrific bonus. As a boost to her profile, and for introducing her to a new generation of potential fans, it is a marketing masterstroke, intentional or not.)

Most of all, people are wondering what an earth this show might be like, can she still sing, what's she going to *do*?

When tickets finally go on sale they sell out in 15 minutes.

What follows is my review of the second night, published in *MOJO* Magazine.

An exaltation of larks.

Kate Bush: Before The Dawn
Hammersmith Apollo

This is a rare roar of welcome from the crowd. It's not, "Yeah! Our favourite band's come on" or "Here we are now, entertain us" this roar says, "We have loved you all our lives", a distillation of all that this woman's work has meant to 5000 expectant souls. I don't know why I'm crying; I know that something good is gonna happen.

Her band is spread across the wide Apollo stage, two keyboards, guitar, bass, drums, percussion (no Del or Danny we note) in a sea of blue light. Her chorus of five backing singers, including son Bertie, truck onstage to the pulsing introduction of Lily. Then the rig explodes with colour, Lily's lyric - 'protect yourself with fire' - illustrated by serried squares of LED light throwing out pixilated flame. Kate is dressed all in black, a billowing shift over wide trousers, the fringed arms rippling in time with her long hair when she sways or spins slowly *a la* Stevie Nicks.

The days of leg warmers and leotards are long behind her and somehow that’s incredibly moving. She's in excellent voice, a richer, deeper voice than when she last played live, but I'm wondering how she'll keep this up every night.

An oddly stilted Running Up That Hill doesn't match the expectation generated by its opening rumble, as if its energy belonged to a earlier version of this woman, but the following King Of The Mountain is stunning. A figure wanders onstage as the song comes to a rolling boil and conjures up a storm, lights pulse, thunder rumbles and confetti canons explode. It’s snowing bits of yellowed paper, which, if caught, reveal the lines from Tennyson’s Idylls Of the King that inspired The Ninth Wave, the second side of *Hounds Of Love*.

Suddenly we’re at sea, this gig has lurched overboard. A screen flickers on and there’s an astronomer telling the coastguard he has received a distress signal from a ship. Dialogue by novelist David Mitchell, no less. And Dream Of Sheep is sung by Kate on film, in a lifejacket, floating on water. Her character’s dilemma, stranded mid-ocean with no immediate

hope of rescue, is played out on screen, her dreams as she drifts in an out of consciousness are enacted on stage. Earlier, Kate bid farewell to a "member of the team", Adrian Noble, former artistic director of the RSC, who helped stage this performance. Whatever mountains Kate gives herself to move, she can call on whoever she likes to lighten the load.

For Under The Ice, life-jacketed members of the chorus carve a hole in the stage to extract her. Bertie and chorus colleague Bob Harms appear in a listing, undersea living-room as father and son waiting for mother to come home, talking about what's on telly and what's for dinner while Kate the absent presence appears behind them to sing Watching You Without Me. Cue lumps in throats. A helicopter ascending from the roof is genuinely scary. A beautiful sequence where the black sea is replicated onstage by just waving fabric and pinlights is chilling as Kate is borne into the auditorium by a fishy funereal procession. It is gripping and emotional in a way that a rock show alone could never be. It's opera. It's spectacle. It's something else.

When it's over, the crowd explodes into another thrilled ovation. This would have been enough. But no, there's more after the intermission. Why, Kate, you are spoiling us. We tumble out to the bar, merch stand and crowded toilets. Everyone looks glazed and amazed.

The second act is The Sky Of Honey from *Aerial*. Kate's costume is now part Chinese conjurer, part blackbird. Bertie plays the painter whose work is somehow influencing the setting and rising of the sun and moon. His younger self, the voice at the start of the piece, is represented by a wooden artist's model touchingly brought to life by puppeteer Ben Thompson. My own son is the age Bertie was then, something about this image, this faceless, wonderstruck figure, makes me catch my breath. The instinct to unsettle in Kate's work is as strong as the impulse to transmit love and empathy. The lovers' tryst is apparently conducted between her and the puppet, or is it motherly love for a child just conceived?

In a wonderful sequence accompanying The Architect's Dream, Kate and the cast become a slow-mo tableau swimming against the tide of time. As a giant paper bird swoops by you almost expect it to carry her aloft to recreate the cover of *The Kick Inside.* Bertie gets to sing the night's only new song, Tawny Moon, while the orb in question waxes up over the backdrop through real clouds and laser lights. In the closing minutes, the screen is filled by single birds caught in achingly slow take-offs, then a vast

dusk-coloured sky erupts with a murmuration of starlings. When a silver birch tree crashes through the stage and Kate's grand piano, it's a signal that this show can't disrupt our sense of gig-going normality much further. Kate has grown a wing, as the piece climaxes she fleetingly transforms into a blackbird and leaves the ground. The crowd roars its love once again. Kate encores with the pellucid, shiversome Among Angels from *50 Words For Snow* and a rousing Cloudbusting, where the whole room sings along: "I know that something good is gonna happen…ee yay ee yay ee yay ee oho."

Considering the creative energy that was poured into *Before The Dawn*, and the transcendent power of the result, just 22 performances seems a crying shame. It could run forever. Those who saw it will never forget it.

While my review is pretty gushing - I feel it’s fair to represent the euphoria I experience from the show, as I'm hard to please at gigs - I'm aware not everyone agrees with me. I hear from someone in the backstage staff that there were grumbles from some theatre professionals about the staging, the stilted dialogue and Bertie's shaky acting and singing. Far from being enthralled, some of those who came to see the previews left quietly after the first half.

Novelist Jonathan Gibbs posts a blog review that articulates similar misgivings, after listing many elements of the staging he considers cliched or embarrassing - waving silk to represent water, the fish and bird skull heads worn by stage hands - he concludes, “The dramaturgy – to use an unfashionable term – was, at times, wince-inducingly bad, in concept like something you’d expect to see in a village hall community theatre production. It made literal, made concrete, made obvious what on record is elusive, evanescent, darkly suggestive.”

Perhaps, but I’d argue that has been the constant, compelling dilemma of Kate: her artwork, her visuals, her videos have always been somewhat naive, ingenuous, flirting with cliché, but she maintains her delicate balance between the preposterous and the profound, the heart in her work trumps the intellect every time. Once in a while she falls from the wire, as in *The Line, The Cross and The Curve*, a brave failure. Waving vast sheets of silk to represent the sea may not be the most original concept, may seem a bit village hall, but in the moment it is breathtaking. And, anyway, that whiff of village hall is pure Kate, she’s always had that “Is there honey still for tea?”, bygone Albion feel to her work. The staging of *Before The Dawn* amplifies that. Theatre snobs scoff but Kate snobs accept the conceits gratefully.

Three weeks after the shows end, Kate posts this on her official website:

Hi there,

Now all the shows are over, it's pretty difficult to explain how I feel about it all. It was quite a surreal journey that kept its level of intensity right from the early stages to the end of the very last show. It was also such great fun.

It was one of the most extraordinary experiences of my life. I loved the whole process. Particularly putting the band, the Chorus and the team together and watching it all evolve. It really was the ultimate combination of talent and artists, both from the music business and the theatre world. I never expected everyone in the team to be so lovely and we all grew very close. We became a family and I really miss them all terribly.

I was really delighted that the shows were received so positively and so warmly but the really unexpected part of it all was the audiences. Audiences that you could only ever dream of. One of the main reasons for wanting to perform live again was to have contact with that audience.They took my breath away. Every single night they were so behind us. You could feel their support from the minute we walked on stage. I just never imagined it would be possible to connect with an audience on such a powerful and intimate level; to feel such, well quite frankly, love. It was like this at every single show.

Thank you so very much to everyone who came to the shows and became part of that shared experience. It was a truly special and wonderful feeling for all of us.

Very best wishes,
Kate x

If nothing else, she reserves the right to constantly surprise us. Whatever she decides to do next - tour the world as a hologram, write a graphic novel, stage an opera underwater or do nothing in public ever again - it will be a move that will delight and satisfy her deepest fans, and if she simply wants to return to where she began, playing the piano alone, that would be fine, that would be enough. Kate Bush has settled in a unique place in pop culture, and in her fans' hearts she has been granted a life-long licence to do exactly as she pleases.

Kate Bush : A chronological playlist

Wuthering Heights
(from *The Kick Inside)*

A peerless debut single, one of the most distinctive ever. Kate had to fight for this odd, chilling song - that's also supremely hooky and emotional - to be her first single, but EMI soon had to admit she was right. An incredible achievement at any point in a career and she did it on day one.

The Man With The Child In His Eyes
(from *The Kick Inside)*

Written earlier (aged 15) but released later, this is the song that impressed David Gilmour and was EMI's first choice for the first single. It would have made an impressive debut, but doesn't pack the punch of Heights. Lyrically, fairly straightforward: she has a male friend who, while technically an adult, still exudes a boyish, vulnerable quality. Ex-boyfriend Steve Blacknall has the most credible claim to being the man in question, though others have suggested it was written before he was on the scene.

The Kick Inside
(from *The Kick Inside*)

"Didn't know you had the face of a genius." A spooky song to close the debut album, shades of Elton John discernible in the piano part, but the melodic movement is pure Kate, the "Giving it all" refrain is subtle but strong, the song's disquieting, suspended ending the first of several in her catalogue…

Breathing
(from *Never For Ever*)

Brooding verses subside into a shapeless chorus and a spoken-word bridge, in this truly bold piece of writing, Anti Nuclear War Songs Narrated By A

Foetus being a category with just one entry.

Babooshka
(from *Never For Ever*)

Now Kate's in charge of production, she finds a new, gutsier sound and inserts beguiling detail at every juncture. The desperate, gargling scream of “I’m all yours!” becomes a trademark vocal tone, and here comes the Fairlight, providing the portmanteau sound of the main riff and a (glass) smashing finale.

Sat In Your Lap
(from *The Dreaming*)

Pummelling drums, synthesiser fanfare, Brubeck-style 5/4 piano part and determinedly batty vocal, it comes across like one of those 1950s abstract Hungarian cartoons of dancing parallelograms translated into song; our first clue that *The Dreaming* would be extraordinary, and consigning the winsome girl of the early albums to history. A deserved but unlikely hit.

Suspended In Gaffa
(from *The Dreaming*)

Oh, just listen to the *The Dreaming*, But, to illustrate its greatness, a deliciously illogical song, invoking a brand of duct tape and mining the mind-set of an artist: “Am I doing it, can I have it all now?” Elsewhere, as in “I’m not a Pandora, I’m much more like that girl in the mirror" and the woozy chorus, "Suddenly my feet are feet of mud, it all goes slo-mo, I don't know why I'm crying, am I suspended in gaffa?” it is a woman on the verge of a nervous breakdown. *The Dreaming* was so laborious for Kate that may well have been the case.

Running Up That Hill
(from *Hounds Of Love*)

Like a more relaxed Sat In Your Lap, this song won respect from her contemporaries upon its release as she sprinted ahead of the pack. An uplifting, liberating pop song, but matching her friend Peter Gabriel for sonic invention and lyrical depth. And you could dance to it, albeit in a slightly stiff, British way. (NB. The chorus melody, once passed through Coldplay, would become one of the signature musical motifs of the 2000's.)

Cloudbusting
(from *Hounds Of Love*)

Chosen as much for the enjoyable video as for the song itself, one of Kate's few entirely successful visual interpretations of her work. Effectively a recreation of the memory of Peter Reich, whose father Wilhelm invented the cloudbuster, a rain-making device which may have hastened his subsequent imprisonment. The pathos in the story is captured on video, while the song is triumphant, the creative surge of an inventor who knows he's onto something, as the boy puts it: "I know that something good is gonna happen".

And Dream Of Sheep
(from *Hounds Of Love*)

Again, it's tempting to select the whole of The Ninth Wave, as Kate has always considered it to be a single work, so when this chilling song - a woman adrift at sea, with no hope of rescue, desperate not to fall asleep in case she never wakes up again - comes to a close, just keep on listening.

The Sensual World
(from *The Sensual World*)

James Joyce! The Chieftans! "Yes"! "My breasts"! What's not to like?

This Woman's Work
(from *She's Having A Baby* soundtrack)

For many, these are the finest few minutes in her catalogue. Simple, original, beautifully realised, at its best in this solo piano rendition. It takes the movie scene it illustrates to an unexpected level and is moving without a visual too. Also affecting when sung by a man, as soul singer Maxwell’s shiversome cover can attest.

Moments Of Pleasure (from *The Red Shoes*)

Kate takes random memories -"Diving off a rock into another moment" - and turns them into a profound poem, encompassing the stillest, smallest, most intimate scenes and the mountainous skyscape of New York. The vast, emotive refrain, "Just being alive, it can really hurt" and her mother's charming saw, "Every old sock meets an old shoe," were both discarded for the glacially slow remake on Director's Cut, an older, less hysterical Kate covering the younger.

The Red Shoes (from *The Red Shoes*)

Fast and furious, with a pumping four-on-the-floor rhythm, her most relentless song encapsulates the ceaseless movement of the shoes in the story, which won't stop dancing until they are removed from the hapless wearer. Why did Kate relate so to this story? Is that what her working life felt like to her? Cue lengthy pause….

King Of The Mountain (from *Aerial*)

Though recorded a couple of years after *The Red Shoes*, this wasn't released for another decade. A curious tribute to Elvis Presley, picturing “the King” reincarnated in a snowy retreat where he comes down the mountain on culture’s only iconic toboggan (spoiler alert), Rosebud from Citizen Kane. The track is surprisingly loose and funky, thanks to Steve Gadds’s infectious drums. Danny McIntosh holds it all together with a guitar line that skanks and twists as if he’s slaloming down the mountain too.

A Coral Room
(from *Aerial*)

Kate's love song to her deceased mother. Sombre, tender and always on the brink of tears. Hannah visits the song as a figure in the doorway and in the talisman of a little brown jug which belonged to her. This is another song that ends musically and lyrically suspended, the line "Put your hand over the boat and what do you feel?" going unanswered, like a relationship curtailed before one is fully ready to say farewell.

An Endless Sky Of Honey
(from *Aerial*)

Go on to Spotify and what was once a suite of songs across *Aerial*'s second disc has now been gathered as a single, vast, 42-minute song. So let's run with the conceit and enjoy this imposing pinnacle in her work. And what is this huge creation about? The transition from summer day to star-spangled night. Kate focusses on the magic we take for granted, as sun sinks into the sea and the world undergoes its ineffable daily change and rebirth. Using the metaphor of a painter to visualise the colours in the sky and a pair of lovers to represent the entwining of day and night, Kate delivers one of her most subtle and rewarding creations with understated majesty. Particular highlights: the flamenco-flavoured Sunset, which includes an exquisitely poetic lyric, and the pulsing sequence formerly known as Nocturne, wherein the lovers go skinny-dipping.

Rubberband Girl
(from *Director's Cut*)

A not especially inspiring single from *The Red Shoes* became one of the few songs to be genuinely improved on Director's Cut, recast with a sexy, Stonesy swagger unlike anything else she's done.

Misty

(from *50 Words For Snow*)

Aside from the recently relabelled An Endless Sky Of Honey (see above), this is the longest single song in her repertoire, and has a claim to being her most sensual, concerning the building of a snowman that subsequently becomes a lover. “It should be a dream, but I’m not sleeping”. As her cool, white-faced swain lies down beside her, Kate plays an icy little theme on the piano. “I can feel him melting in my hands.” It’s a curious fantasy but she makes it gripping for almost a quarter of an hour, with the redoubtable Danny Thompson providing the song’s sexy heart-throb and slither on double bass, husband Danny McIntosh on glacial guitar and the great Steve Gadd providing perfect, low-temperature drums.

Among Angels
(from *50 Words For Snow*)

A snowflake-delicate song which closed the Before The Dawn shows to spine-tangling effect. A fitting way to sign off.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

At 18, Jim Irvin formed a band called Furniture and sang and co-wrote their hit, Brilliant Mind in 1986. In 1990 he started working as a music journalist and became the founding features editor of *MOJO* magazine in 1994. In 2001 he returned to songwriting and production full-time. He has written songs with Lana Del Rey, Lissie, David Guetta, Gabrielle Aplin, Pixie Lott, Simple Plan, Michael Gray, Groove Armada, Nothing But Thieves and many others. He continues to write a regular column for *MOJO* and has also contributed to *The Word, The Times, The Sunday Times, The Guardian* and *Rolling Stone*.

He has one son and lives in Hove, England.

SOURCES and BOOKS

Almost everything in the Sandy Denny section is based on original interviews I conducted in 1998.

I am indebted to Adam Blake who supplied me with valuable material he had gathered about Sandy's very early folk club days, and who didn't receive any credit at the time due to a production oversight. My apologies and belated thanks.

In the Joni Mitchell and Kate Bush sections I have noted the sources for quotes within the text. I could not have written the Joni Mitchell chapter without the incredible resource that is joni.mitchell.com where, it seems, every journalistic word ever written about her is stored in its database. Likewise, anyone who cares about Kate Bush should visit www.katebushnews.com whose proprietors have been in the business of documenting her and her work since 1982, they also publish the Homegrown fanzine which has recently been anthologised. Also useful, Reaching Out, the corner of the Gaffa Web (gaffa.org) site which collected transcripts of many of Kate's interviews. You should also read Graeme Thompson's excellent biography, *Under The Ivy*, which covers Kate's history in quietly authoritative detail.

There have been several books about Sandy Denny, and each has their adherents and detractors. Clinton Heylin's *No More Sad Refrains* covers the ground well but takes a stand that some disagree with. Martin Carthy has been particularly vocal about Heylin's take on Trevor, saying the book unfairly portrays him as a villain. Philip Ward's *Sandy Denny: Reflections On Her Music* is thoughtful, concentrating mostly, as its title suggests, on academic discourse about the records. But the definitive Sandy biography is Mick Houghton's recently published *I've Always Kept A Unicorn*, which is moving and thorough and simply lays out the story without fawning or passing judgement.

Regarding further reading on Joni, one should proceed with caution. She's not terribly fond of biographers and has said they've all got it wrong. But it looks as if she approved J*oni Mitchell: In her Own Words*, a distillation of conversations undertaken between 1966 and 2012 between Joni and author Malka Marom.

DISCOGRAPHIES

Here are discographies of the major album releases by each artist, presented chronologically. Catalogue numbers are for original UK pressings and the listings are based on the original vinyl albums. Later releases that were sequenced as CDs have not been separated into sides. Bonus tracks in subsequent CD editions have not been included.

Sandy Denny: An album discography

Alex Campbell

Alex Campbell and his Friends

1967.
Saga Records ERO 8021

Recorded March 22, 1967.

Sandy appears on three of fifteen tracks:

The False Bride, You Never Wanted Me, This Train

UK chart peak: -
US chart peak: -

Sandy Denny & Johnny Silvo

Sandy and Johnny

September 1967?
Saga Records EROS 8041

Rccorded March 22 & April 26, 1967.

Alternating solo tracks by Sandy and Johnny Silvo, recorded at separate sessions. Sandy appears on seven of fourteen tracks:

Milk and Honey, The Last Thing on My Mind, The 3:10 to Yuma, Make Me A Pallet on Your Floor, Pretty Polly, Been On The Road So Long, My Ramblin' Boy

UK chart peak: -
US chart peak: -

Sandy Denny

It's Sandy Denny

1970
Saga Records EROS8153

The ten solo tracks recorded for Saga collected onto one album.

Has also appeared as *The Original Sandy Denny* (Mooncrest 1978) and *Where The Time Goes - Sandy '67.* (Castle 2005)

1. This Train, The 3.10 to Yuma, Pretty Polly, You Never Wanted Me, Milk and Honey.

2. My Rambling Boy, The Last Thing on My Mind, Make Me a Pallet on Your Floor, The False Bride, Been On the Road So Long

UK chart peak: -
US chart peak: -

Sandy Denny & The Strawbs

All Our Own Work

1973
Pickwick SHM 813

Recorded in Copenhagen in 1967, this was the album Sandy was carrying when she first met Joe Boyd. However, that was a test pressing, it wasn't actually released until 1973 when it appeared on the budget Pickwick label. It has been reissued several times since then, with different sleeves and sequences, notably in 1991 with restored string arrangements.

Sandy appears on seven of the twelve tracks:

On My Way, Who Knows Where the Time Goes?, Tell Me What You See in Me, Stay Awhile with Me, All I Need Is You, Sail Away to the SeaAnd You Need Me

UK chart peak: -
US chart peak: -

Fairport Convention

What We Did On Our Holidays

January 1969
Island ILPS 9092

1. Fotheringay, Mr Lacey, Book Song, The Lord Is in This Place, I'll Keep It with Mine

2. Eastern Rain, Nottamun Town, She Moves Through the Fair, Meet On The Ledge

Produced by Joe Boyd

UK chart peak: -
US chart peak: -

Fairport Convention

Unhalfbricking

July 1969
Island ILPS 9102

1. Genesis Hall, Si Tu Dois Partir, Autopsy, A Sailor's Life

2. Cajun Woman, Who Knows Where the Time Goes, Percy’s Song, Million Dollar Bash

Produced by Joe Boyd

UK chart peak: 12
US chart peak: -

Fairport Convention

Liege & Lief

December 1969
Island ILPS 9115

1. Come All Ye, Reynardine, Matty Groves, Farewell Farewell

2. The Deserter, Tam Lin, Crazy Man Michael

Produced by Joe Boyd

UK chart peak: 17
US chart peak: -

Fotheringay

Fotheringay

June 1970
Island ILPS9125

Sole complete album by Sandy's post-Fairport band, featuring her partner Trevor Lucas. A second album, largely comprising songs which would appear on her first solo album, was started but abandoned, those sessions have been issued as Fotheringay 2

1. Nothing More, The Sea, Winter Winds, Peace in the End

2. The Way I Feel, Pond and the Stream, Banks of the Nile

Produced by Joe Boyd.

UK chart peak: 18
US chart peak: -

Sandy Denny

The North Star Grassman and the Ravens

September 1971
Island ILPS 9165

First solo album.

1. Late November, Blackwaterside, The Sea Captain, Down in the Flood, John the Gun, Next Time Around

2. The Optimist, Let's Jump The Broomstick, Wretched Wilbur, North Star Grassman and the Ravens, Crazy Lady Blues

Produced by Sandy Denny, Richard Thompson and John Wood.

UK chart peak: 31
US chart peak: -

The Bunch

Rock On

April 1972 Island

One-off, rock’n’roll covers collection featuring assorted members of the Fairport circle recorded at the Manor studios. Sandy’s lead vocals featured on five tracks marked *

1. Crazy Arms, *That'll Be the Day, Don’t Be Cruel, The Loco-Motion, My Girl, *Love’s Made a Fool of You
2. *Willie and the Hand Jive, Jambalaya (On The Bayou), *When Will I Be Loved? Nadine, Sweet Little Rock n Roller, *Learning the Game
(bonus flexi-disc) Let There Be Drums

Produced by Trevor Lucas

UK chart peak: -
US chart peak: -

Sandy Denny

Sandy

September 1972
Island ILPS 9207

1. It’ll Take a Long Time, Sweet Rosemary, For Nobody to Hear, Tomorrow Is a Long Time, Quiet Joys of Brotherhood

2. Listen, Listen, The Lady, Bushes and Briars, It Suits Me Well, The Music Weaver

Produced by Trevor Lucas.

UK chart peak: -
US chart peak: -

Sandy Denny

Like An Old Fashioned Waltz

June 1974
Island ILPS 9258

1. Solo, Like an Old Fashioned Waltz, Whispering Grass, Friends, Carnival

2. Dark the Night, At the End of the Day, Until The Real Thing Comes Along, No End

Produced by Trevor Lucas. String arrangements by Harry Robinson.

UK chart peak: -
US chart peak: -

Fairport Convention

Fairport Live Convention

July 1974
Island ILPS 9285

Fairport live album compiled from shows in Sydney, London Finsbury Park and Croyden when Sandy had rejoined the band. Known as *A Moveable Feast* in the US.

1. Matty Groves, Rosie, Fiddlestix, John the Gun, Something You Got

2. Sloth, Dirty Linen, Down in the Flood, Sir B. McKenzie.

UK chart peak: -
US chart peak: -

Fairport Convention

Rising for the Moon

June 1975
Island ILPS 9

Sandy's return to Fairport.

1. Rising for the Moon, Restless, White Dress, Let It Go, Stranger to Himself*

2. What is True?, Iron Lion, Dawn, After Halloween, Night Time Girl One More Chance

All lead vocals Sandy Denny, except Restless and Iron Lion by Trevor Lucas, Let It Go and Night Time Girl by Dave Swarbrick.

Produced by Glyn Johns

UK chart peak: 52
US chart peak: -

Sandy Denny

Rendezvous

May 1977 Island ILPS 9433

The final album.

1. I Wish I Was a Fool for You, Gold Dust, Candle in the Wind, Take Me Away, One Way Donkey Ride
2. I’m a Dreamer, All Our Days, Silver Threads and Golden Needles, No More Sad Refrains

Produced by Trevor Lucas.

UK chart peak: -
US chart peak: -

Sandy Denny

Gold Dust: Live at the Royalty

June 1998 Island IMCD 252

Excellent posthumous live album. Recorded at the Royalty Theatre, Portugal Street, London, 27 November 1977

I Wish I Was a Fool for You, Stranger to Himself, I'm a Dreamer, Take Me Away, Nothing More, The Sea, The Lady, Gold Dust, Solo, John the Gun, It'll Take a Long Time, Wretched Wilbur, Tomorrow Is a Long Time, The Northstar Grassman and the Ravens, One More Chance, No More Sad Refrains, Who Knows Where the Time Goes

UK chart peak: -
US chart peak: -

Sandy Denny

Live At The BBC

2007 Island 984 992-8

Disc 1
In Session

‘Folk Song Cellar’ 1966: Fhir A’ Bhata, Green Grow the Laurel
‘Cellar Full Of Folk’ 1967: Hold On To Me Babe, Blues Run The Game
‘Bob Harris Show ‘1971: Late November, The Optimist, Crazy Lady Blues, The Lowlands Of Holland
‘Bob Harris Show’ 1972: It Suits Me Well, The Music Weaver, Bushes and Briars, It’ll Take A Long Time
‘John Peel Show 1973’: Solo, Like An Old Fashioned Waltz, Who Knows Where The Time Goes
‘Bob Harris Show’ 1973: Until The Real Thing Comes Along, Whispering Grass, Dark The Night, Solo

Disc 2
In Concert

‘In Concert at the Paris Theatre’ 1972: The North Star Grassman and the Ravens, Sweet Rosemary, The Lady, Bruton Town, Next Time Around, Blackwaterside, John The Gun
‘Sounds On Sunday’ 1973: The Lady, Bushes and Briars, It Suits Me Well, Blackwaterside, The Music Weaver, The Sea Captain, John The Gun
‘Tomorrow’s People’ 1972: Interview with Sandy Denny

Disc 3
DVD

One In Tn 1971: The North Star Grassman and the Ravens, Crazy Lady Blues, Late November
(Though Sandy made several appearances on BBC TV these are, sadly, the only ones that have survived.)

Disc 4
Off-Air Recordings

These are the best of the performances which exist only as tapes made by fans when they were broadcast, the on-air recordings having not survived in the BBC archive.

BBC World Service 1967: This Train, Make Me A Pallet On Your Floor, The Last Thing On My Mind, You Never Wanted Me.
“My Kind Of Folk” 1967: Been On The Road So Long, This Quiet land Of Erin
“The Spinners’ TV Show”: 1971: Sweet Nightingale (with Mick Groves), Blackwaterside (with Richard Thompson)
Bob Harris Show 1971:The North Star Grassman and the Ravens
“The Old Grey Whistle Test” TV show 1972: The Lady, It’ll Take A long Time

UK chart peak: -
US chart peak: -

Sandy Denny

Sandy Denny

November 2010 Island/Universal

There have been numerous reissues of Sandy's core catalogue, often with alternative takes, unreleased tracks and demos added. There have also been several excellent best-of sets, and two fine boxed sets of rarities and essential tracks, one by Joe Boyd for Hannibal in 1985 (*Who Knows Where The Time Goes*) and one by Fledg'ling Music in 2006 (*Boxful Of Treasures*). But those were effectively superseded by this giant enterprise, a mammoth 19 disc repository of practically everything she ever recorded. Certainly all the official studio sessions are here, save for her appearance on Led Zeppelin's Battle Of Evermore, and the majority of the demos and outtakes that were in the Universal archive and Sandy's own archive of tapes. So I have included this listing in some detail as a general guide to what's out there. The only substantial portion of her work missing from this are the radio and TV recordings, the bulk of which appear on the *Live At The BBC* boxed set listed above.

Disc 1

Alex Campbell and his Friends

1. The False Bride
2. You Never Wanted Me
3. This Train

Sandy and Johnny

4. Milk and Honey
5. The Last Thing on My Mind
6. The 3:10 to Yuma
7. Make Me a Pallet on Your Floor
8. Pretty Polly
9. Been on the Road So Long
10. My Ramblin' Boy

It's Sandy Denny
11. The 3.10 to Yuma
12. Pretty Polly
13. Milk and Honey
14. The Last Thing on My Mind
15. Make Me a Pallet on Your Floor

Disc 2
All Our Own Work - Sandy Denny and The Strawbs
1. On My Way
2. Who Knows Where the Time Goes?
3. Tell Me What You See in Me
4. Stay Awhile with Me
5. All I Need Is You
6. Sail Away to the Sea
7. And You Need Me

Sandy Denny and The Strawbs (1991 re-issue with strings)
8. Nothing Else Will Do (Sandy lead vocal)
9. Who Knows Where the Time Goes? (strings)
10. And You Need Me (strings)
11. Tell Me What You See in Me (added sitar)
12. Stay Awhile with Me (strings)
13. Two Weeks Last Summer

Swedish Fly Girls (film soundtrack)
14. Water Mother
15. What Will I Do Tomorrow?
16. Are the Judges Sane?
17. I Need You

Disc 3
What We Did on Our Holidays - Fairport Convention
1. Fotheringay
2. Mr Lacey
3. Book Song
4. The Lord Is in This Place
5. I'll Keep It with Mine
6. Eastern Rain

7. Nottamun Town
8. She Moves Through the Fair
9. Meet on the Ledge

Unhalfbricking - Fairport Convention

10. Genesis Hall
11. Si Tu Dois Partir
12. Autopsy
13. A Sailor's Life
14. Cajun Woman
15 Who Knows Where the Time Goes
16. Percy's Song
17. Million Dollar Bash

Bonus tracks

18. Mr Lacey - Sandy lead vocal
19. Autopsy - alternate take

Disc 4

Liege & Lief - Fairport Convention

1. Come All Ye
2. Reynardine
3. Matty Groves
4. Farewell Farewell
5. The Deserter
6. Tam Lin
7. Crazy Man Michael

Bonus tracks

8. Come All Ye (take 1)
9. Matty Groves (take 1)

Disc 5

Fotheringay - Fotheringay

1. Nothing More
2. The Sea
3. Winter Winds
4. Peace in the End
5. The Way I Feel
6. Pond and the Stream

7. Banks of the Nile

Fotheringay 2 - Fotheringay

8. John the Gun
9. Eppy Moray
10. Wild Mountain Thyme
11. Late November
12. Gypsy Davey
13. Silver Threads and Golden Needles
14. Two Weeks Last Summer
15. Gypsy Davey (Joe Boyd mix)
16. Late November (Joe Boyd mix)
17. Two Weeks Last Summer (Joe Boyd mix)

Disc 6

The North Star Grassman and the Ravens

1. Late November
2. Blackwaterside
3. The Sea Captain
4. Down in the Flood
5. John the Gun
6. Next Time Around
7. The Optimist
8. Let's Jump the Broomstick
9. Wretched Wilbur
10. Northstar Grassman and the Ravens
11. Crazy Lady Blues

Bonus tracks

12 Late November (El Pea version)

13. Blackwaterside (Alternate take)
14. Next Time Around (Alternate take without strings)

Rock On - The Bunch

15. That'll Be the Day
16. Love’s Made a Fool of You
17. Willie and the Hand Jive
18. When Will I Be Loved?
19. Learning the Game

Disc 7

Sandy

1. It'll Take a Long Time
2. Sweet Rosemary
3. For Nobody to Hear
4. Tomorrow Is a Long Time
5. Quiet Joys of Brotherhood
6. Listen, Listen
7. The Lady
8. Bushes and Briars
9. It Suits Me Well
10. The Music Weaver

Bonus tracks

11. Ecoute, Ecoute (Listen, Listen French version)
12. For Nobody to Hear (original version)
13. The Music Weaver (without strings)
14. Here in Silence (From the short film *Pass of Arms*)
15. Man of Iron (From the short film *Pass of Arms*)

Disc 8

Like an Old Fashioned Waltz

1. Solo
2. Like an Old Fashioned Waltz
3. Whispering Grass
4. Friends
5. Carnival
6. Dark the Night
7. At the End of the Day
8. Until The Real Thing Comes Along
9. No End

Bonus tracks

10. Solo (no overdubs)
11. Like an Old Fashioned Waltz (without strings)
12 Friends (Alternate version)
13. Dark the night (Alternate take)
14. At the End of the Day (alternate take w/o strings)
15. No End (alternate take w/o strings)

Disc 9[

Fairport Live Convention - Fairport Convention[edit]

1. Matty Groves (live version)
2. John the Gun (live version)
3. Something You Got (live version)
4. Down in the Flood (live version)
5. That'll Be The Day (live version)

Rising for the Moon - Fairport Convention

6. Rising for the Moon
7. Restless
8. White Dress
9. Stranger to Himself
10. What is True?
11. Dawn
12. After Halloween
13. One More Chance

Bonus tracks

14. White Dress (Alternate version)
15. Dawn (Alternate version)
16. One More Chance (alternate take)
17. Breakfast in Mayfair (from *The Man They Couldn't Hang*)

Disc 10

Rendezvous

1. I Wish I Was a Fool for You
2. Gold Dust
3. Candle in the Wind
4. Take Me Away
5. One Way Donkey Ride
6. I'm a Dreamer
7. All Our Days
8. Silver Threads and Golden Needles
9. No More Sad Refrains

Bonus tracks

10. Full Moon (Bonus track on US Hannibal release)
11. Still Waters Run Deep (‘Candle in the wind’ b-side)
12. I’m a Dreamer (Alternate take without strings)
13. All Our Days (full length version)
14. No More Sad Refrains (without strings)
15. Full Moon (Alternative version feat. Dave Swarbrick solo)

Disc 11

Gold Dust: Live at the Royalty

1. I Wish I Was a Fool for You
2. Stranger to Himself
3. I’m a Dreamer
4. Take Me Away
5. Nothing More
6. The Sea
7. The Lady
8. Gold Dust
9. Solo
10. John the Gun
11. It’ll Take a Long Time
12. Wretched Wilbur
13. Tomorrow Is a Long Time
14. The Northstar Grassman and the Ravens
15. One More Chance
16. No More Sad Refrains
17. Who Knows Where the Time Goes

Disc 12

The Early Home Demos

1. Blues Run the Game
2. Milk and Honey
3. Soho
4. It Ain’t Me Babe
5. East Virginia
6. Geordie
7. In Memory (The Tender Years)
8. I Love My True Love

9. Let No Man Steal Your Thyme
10. ‘Ethusel’ (Unknown track)
11. Carnival
12. Setting of the sun
13. Boxful of Treasures
14. They Don’t Seem to Know You
15. Gerrard Street
16. Fotheringay
17. She Moves Through the Fair
18. The Time Has Come
19. Seven Virgins
20. A Little Bit of Rain
21. Go Your Own Way My Love
22. Cradle Song
23. Blue Tattoo
24. The Quiet Land of Erin
25. Who Knows Where the Time Goes (1st demo 1967)

Disc 13
Solo & Fairport Convention

1. Who Knows Where the Time Goes (2nd demo 1968)
2. Motherless Children (home demo)
3. Milk and Honey (Live BBC, Cellarful of Folk 21/3/67)
4. Been on the Road So Long (Live BBC, My Kind of Folk 26/6/68)
5. Quiet Land of Erin (Live BBC, My Kind of Folk 26/6/68)
6. Autopsy (demo)
7. Now and Then (demo)
8. Fotheringay (Acoustic version)
9. She Moved Through the Fair (Acoustic version)
10. Mr. Lacey (live BBC, Stuart Henry Show 02/12/68)
11. Throwaway Street Puzzle
12. Ballad of Easy Rider
13. Dear Landlord
14. A Sailors Life (1st version without Swarb)
15. Sir Patrick Spens
16. Quiet Joys of Brotherhood (take 1)
17. Quiet Joys of Brotherhood (take 4)

Disc 14
Fotheringay
1. The Sea (studio demo)
2. Winter Winds (studio demo)
3. The Pond and the Stream (studio demo)
4. The Way I Feel (original version)
5. Banks of the Nile (alternate take)
6. Winter Winds (alternate take)
7. Silver Threads and Golden Needles (1st album outtake)
8. The Sea (live Holland Festival, Rotterdam 1970)
9. Two Weeks Last Summer (live Holland Festival, Rotterdam 1970)
10. Nothing More (live Holland Festival, Rotterdam 1970)
11. Banks of the Nile (live Holland Festival, Rotterdam 1970)
12. Memphis Tennessee (live Holland Festival, Rotterdam 1970)
13. Trouble (live Holland Festival, Rotterdam 1970)
14. Bruton Town (band rehearsal)

Disc 15
North Star Grassman and the Ravens & Sandy
1. The Sea Captain (demo)
2. Next Time Around (demo)
3. The Optimist (demo)
4. Wretched Wilbur (demo)
5. Crazy Lady Blues (demo)
6. Lord Bateman (demo)
7. Walking the Floor Over You (duet with Richard Thompson)
8. Losing Game
9. Northstar Grassman and the Ravens (Live, BBC One in Ten)
10. Crazy Lady Blues (Live, BBC One in Ten)
11. Late November (Live, BBC One in Ten)
12. If You Saw Thru My Eyes (duet with Ian Matthews)
13. It's A Boy (Tommy As Performed by The London Symphony Orchestra 1972)
14. North Star Grassman and the Ravens (Live, BBC Bob Harris Show 06/09/71)
15. 12th of Never

16. Sweet Rosemary (Manor demo alternate take)
17. The Lady (Manor demo)
18. After Halloween (Manor demo)

Disc 16

Sandy & Like An Old Fashioned Waltz

1. It'll Take a Long Time (demo)
2. Sweet Rosemary (Manor demo)
3. For Nobody to Hear (demo)
4. Tomorrow is a Long Time (demo)
5. Quiet Joys of Brotherhood (demo)
6. Listen, Listen (Manor demo)
7. The Lady (demo)
8. Bushes and Briars (demo)
9. It Suits Me Well (demo)
10. The Music Weaver (demo)
11. No End (piano version alternate take with studio chat)
12. Whispering Grass (studio demo)
13. Until the Real Thing Comes Along (studio demo)
14. Walking the Floor Over You (1973 version)
15. No End (solo piano version)

Disc 17

Fairport Live at the LA Troubadour 1974 & Interviews

1. Down in the Flood (live at the LA Troubadour)
2. Solo (live at the LA Troubadour)
3. It'll take a Long Time (live at the LA Troubadour)
4. She moved through the Fair (live at the LA Troubadour)
5. Knockin' on Heavens Door (live at the LA Troubadour)
6. Like An Old Fashioned Waltz (live at the LA Troubadour)
7. John the Gun (live at the LA Troubadour)
8. Crazy Lady Blues (live at the LA Troubadour)
9. Who Knows Where the Time Goes (live at the LA Troubadour)
10. Matty Groves (live at the LA Troubadour)
11. That'll be the Day (live at the LA Troubadour)
12. What is True (studio demo)

13. Sandy interviewed about Like An Old Fashioned Waltz. BBC radio, John Peel Sounds on Sunday 06/01/1974
14. Sandy interviewed in 1974 to promote Like An Old Fashioned Waltz and her return to Fairport Convention. BBC Manchester Piccadilly

Disc 18
Rendezvous
1. Blackwaterside (live Marc Time 1975)
2. No More Sad Refrains (live Marc Time 1975)
3. By The Time It Gets Dark (acoustic studio demo)
4. One Way Donkey Ride (acoustic version)
5. Losing Game (with Jess Roden)
6. Easy to Slip
7. By The Time It Gets Dark (studio demo)
8. No More Sad Refrains (live at Basing Street 25/04/76)
9. I'm a Dreamer (live at Basing Street 25/04/76)
10. All Our Days (Choral version)
11. By The Time It Gets Dark (studio take with full band)
12. Still Waters Run Deep (Acoustic version)
13. Full Moon (acoustic version)
14. Candle in the Wind (piano version)
15. Moments
16. I Wish I Was a Fool for You (Original Gold Dust LP version)
17. Gold Dust (Original Gold Dust LP version)
18. Still Waters Run Deep (Original Gold Dust LP version)
19. Moments (Acoustic version) actual final studio recording

Disc 19
The Byfield demos 74-77
1. King And Queen of England (demo with piano introduction)
2. Rising For the Moon (demo)
3. One More Chance (demo)
4. King and Queen of England (take 1, demo)
5. After Halloween (demo 1974)
6. What Is True (demo)
7. Stranger to Himself (demo)
8. Take Away the Load (demo)

9. By the Time It Gets Dark (demo)
10. I’m a Dreamer (demo)
11. Full Moon (demo)
12. Take Me Away (demo)
13. All Our Days (demo)
14. No More Sad Refrains (demo)
15. Still Waters Run Deep (demo)
16. One Way Donkey Ride (demo)
17. I’m a Dreamer (2nd demo)
18. Full Moon (2nd demo)
19. Makes Me Think of You (demo)

UK chart peak: -
US chart peak: -

My review of the boxed set from The Word magazine, September 2010.

Sandy Denny
Sandy Denny
ISLAND/ UNIVERSAL

The press release accompanying this conclusive 19 CD collection asks fans to assess the legacy of Alexandra Elene MacLean Denny. Former KLF frontman and agent provocateur Bill Drummond declares: “Other generations may have had Ian Curtis or Kurt Cobain, but for me the voice of Sandy Denny is enough for my lifetime.”

Hear hear. Few voices move me the way Sandy’s has since I were a nine year old hearing Fairport Convention’s *A Sailor’s Life* for the first time, transfixed and wanting to hear it again and again, without entirely knowing why. Something about that performance – a supernatural performance by the entire band, incidentally – tapped into some genetic material and downloaded history into it. Sandy’s as close as I’ll come to a cultural keystone, as others might recognise Lata Mangeshkar, Edith Piaf or Bruce Springsteen, a defining voice which not only speaks to, but translates and transmits one’s soul.

Let’s assume nobody’s coming to a box this vast as a casual listener. If you’re dropping 150 quid it’s because you’re a connoisseur, so you’ll want to know what’s in this archive for you. Fundamentally, her complete works, everything she ever committed to tape, minus some incomplete takes, some broadcasts (the *Sandy Denny Live At The BBC* box takes care of those), and Led Zeppelin’s *Battle Of Evermore*. Everything else I’ve ever heard of appears to be present. Everything released commercially is here across the first 11 discs, from the Alex Campbell and Johnny Silvo sessions of 1967 to The Strawbs, Fairport Convention, Fotheringay and all the solo works, each with additional tracks, usually alternative mixes, some released before, and others, like the unstrung mixes of the orchestrated songs from *Like An Old Fashioned Waltz*, have been sought by deep fans for a while. There are also rare recordings made between albums, the elusive soundtracks to *Swedish Fly Girls* and *Pass Of Arms* (the striking and gorgeous *Man Of Iron* is a must) and shelved versions of songs from an earlier iteration of her final

album, *Rendezvous*. There's also the stunning, posthumously released *Gold Dust: Live At The Royalty.*

So what fills a mere *eight* CDs of "bonus tracks"? Primarily, the reel-to-reel tapes and cassettes held by Sandy's husband Trevor's second wife, Elizabeth, after the couple's cruelly early deaths. These start with pre-Fairport home demos, 25 songs, officially unreleased but most of them bootlegged *as The Attic Tracks Vol. 3* and *Borrowed Thyme,* with all the dubious sonic qualities you might imagine. Among them is an instructive find, what was probably Sandy's first crack at *Who Know Where The Time Goes*, previously unheard, which she plays too fast as if anxious to catch it. Then there's the unreleased Fairport Convention live album recorded at the LA Troubadour, demos for her solo albums, and the so-called Byfield tapes, intimate demos cut in her Gloucestershire home, some have surfaced before in *Boxful Of Treasures*, many have never been heard officially. There are, therefore, multiple versions of certain songs, evolving through demo and unused takes to final master and subsequent live performance. There are just 15 songs we've not heard Sandy sing before, among them Lord Bateman – a shivery *a capella* traditional air demoed for *North Star Grassman* and thought to have been lost - and versions of Fred Neil's A Little Bit Of Rain, Dylan's It Aint Me Babe and some jejeune compositions about Soho. There are also some radio interviews. I enjoyed hearing her speak. Chatting with John Peel, she says her new haircut makes her look like Dave Hill from Slade.

I'm struggling to think of another artist who has been afforded such a lavish archiving of their output. Does she deserve it? Absolutely. But does it enrich our view of her? I don't know. I can't think more highly of her. To be honest, the review experience left something to be desired, juggling online with 315 un-named MP3s and multiple track-listings, an irksome, fiddly pursuit which could take the shine off anyone's love, but I imagine sitting at home, luxuriating in the packaging and steadily working through it over several evenings would be a delight. I've discovered over the years that I'm not an avid consumer of outtakes. Once in a blue moon - Marvin Gaye's *Piece Of Clay,* for example - you find an overlooked gem, but outtakes are usually taken out for good reason. Every single one of these performances has something to recommend it, an arresting vocal nuance, a fresh shiver from a tonal shift or some exquisite phrasing you haven't already

committed to memory, but you may decide that, on balance, you prefer the music you already know.

Even ardent fans admit she never got around to making a wholly focused record, her songwriting style can be pretty elliptical and there was always an ill-judged cover version, guest vocal or stylistic gear-change breaking the spell. If nothing else, this box allows you to shuffle the best work into satisfying new sequences to your heart’s content.

It’s a beautiful object, obviously a labour of love and a fine tribute to a unique artist. Sandy, famously low in self-esteem, would probably be horrified by it. But she can rest in peace. She remains without peer. I leave you with modern, crystal-voiced Rachel Unthank, also quoted in the press release: “Don't listen to her! You'll realise that the rest of us are wasting your time.”

Joni Mitchell: An album discography

Song To A Seagull

(aka *Joni Mitchell*)
March 1968
Reprise

The title got lost from artwork in earlier pressings, so album was initially self-titled. The two sides are referred to as Part 1 and Part 2 on the sleeve. Part 1 is “I Came To The City” and Part 2 is “Out Of The City And Down To The Seaside”

1. I Had A King, Michael From Mountains, Night In the City, Marcie, Nathan La Freneer

2. Sisotowbell Lane, The Dawntreader, The Pirate of Penance, Song To A Seagull, Cactus Tree.

Produced by David Crosby

UK chart peak: -
US chart peak: 189

Clouds

May 1, 1969
Reprise

1. Tin Angel; Chelsea Morning; I Don’t Know Where I Stand; That Song About The Medway; Roses Blue

2. The Gallery; I Think I Understand; Songs To Ageing Children Come;The Fiddle And The Drum; Both Sides, Now

Produced by Paul A Rothchild.

UK chart peak: -
US chart peak: 31

Ladies Of the Canyon

March 1970
Reprise RSLP 6376

1. Morning Morgantown, For Free, Conversation, Ladies Of The Canyon, Willy, The Arrangement

2. Rainy Night House, The Priest, Blue Boy, Big Yellow Taxi, Woodstock, The Circle Game

Produced by Joni Mitchell

UK chart peak: 8
US chart peak: 27

Blue

June 22, 1971
Reprise K44128

1. All I Want, My Old Man, Little Green, Carey, Blue

2. California, This Flight Tonight, River, A Case Of You, The Last Time I Saw Richard

Produced by Joni Mitchell

UK chart peak: 3
US chart peak: 15

For The Roses

November 1972
Asylum

1. Banquet, Cold Blue Steel and Sweet Fire, Barangrill, Lesson In Survival, Let The Wind Carry Me, For The Roses

2. See You Sometime, Electricity, You Turn Me On I’m a Radio, Blonde In The Bleachers, Woman Of Heart And Mind

Produced by Joni Mitchell

UK chart peak: -
US chart peak: 11

Court And Spark

January 1, 1974
Asylum SYLA 8756

1. Court And Spark, Help Me, Free Man In Paris, People’s Parties, The Same Situation,

2. Car On a Hill, Down To You, Just Like This Train, Raised On Robbery, Trouble Child, Twisted

Produced by Joni Mitchell

UK chart peak: 14
US chart peak: 2

Miles Of Aisles

November 1974
Asylum SYSP 902

Double live album, first tour with a full band.

1.You Turn Me On, I’m A Radio; Big Yellow Taxi; Rainy Night House; Woodstock

2. Cactus Tree, Cold Blue Steel and Blue Fire, Woman of Heart And Mind, A Case Of You, Blue

3. The Circle Game, People’s Parties, All I Want, For Free, Both Sides Now

4. Carey, The Last Time I Saw Richard, Jericho, Love Or Money

Produced by Joni Mitchell

UK chart peak: 34
US chart peak: 2

The Hissing Of Summer Lawns

November 1975
Asylum SYLA 8763

1. In France They Kiss On Main Street, The Jungle Line, Edith and the Kingpin, Don’t Interrupt the Sorrow, Shades Of Scarlet Conquering

2. The Hissing Of Summer Lawns, The Boho Dance, Harry’s House/Centrepiece, Sweet Bird, Shadows and Light

Produced by Joni Mitchell

UK chart peak: 14
US chart peak: 4

Hejira

November 1976
Asylum K 53053

1. Coyote, Amelia, Furry Sings the Blues, A Strange Boy, Hejira

2. Song For Sharon, Black Crow, Blue Motel Room, Refuge Of The Roads

Produced by Joni Mitchell

UK chart peak: 11
US chart peak: 13

Don Juan's Reckless Daughter

December 13, 1977
Asylum 63003

1. Overture - Cotton Avenue, Talk To Me, Jerich

2. Paprika Plains

3. Otis and Marlena, The Tenth World, Dreamland

4. Don Juan's Reckless Daughter, Off-Night Backstreet, The Silky Veils Of Ardor.

Produced by Joni Mitchell

UK chart peak: 20
US chart peak: 25

Mingus

June 13, 1979
Asylum K53091

Tracks marked * are Joni Mitchell lyrics set to compositions by Charles Mingus. Tracks marked (Rap) are spoken interludes.

1. Happy Birthday 1975 (Rap), God Must be a Boogie Man, Funeral (Rap), The Chair In The Sky*, The Wolf That Lives In Lindsey

2. I’s A Muggin (Rap), Sweet Sucker Dance*, Coin In the Pocket (Rap), The Dry Cleaner From Des Moines*, Lucky (Rap), Goodbye Pork Pie Hat*

Produced by Joni Mitchell

UK chart peak: 24
US chart peak: 17

Shadows And Light

September 1980
Asylum/Elektra K62030

Her last album for Asylum is a double live album.

1. Introduction, In France They Kiss On Main Street, Edith and the Kingpin, Coyote, Goodbye Pork Pie Hat

2. The Dry Cleaner From Des Moines, Amelia, Pat's Solo, Hejira

3. Black Crow, Dreamland, Free Man In Paris, Furry Sings The Blue

4. Why Do Fools Fall In Love, Shadows and Light, God Must Be A Boogie Man

Produced by Joni Mitchell

UK chart peak: 63
US chart peak: 38

Wild Things Run Fast

October 1982
Geffen GEFF 25102

1. Chinese Cafe/Unchained Melody, Wild Things Run Fast, Ladies Man, Moon At the Window, Solid Love

2. Be Cool, (You’re So Square) Baby I Don’t Care, You Dream Flat Tires, Man To Man, Underneath the Streetlights, Love

Produced by Joni Mitchell

UK chart peak: 32
US chart peak: 25

Dog Eat Dog

October 1985
Geffen GEFF 26455

1. Good Friends, Fiction, The Three Great stimulants, Tax Free, Smokin' (Empty, Try Another)

2. Dog Eat Dog, Shiny Toys, Ethiopia, Impossible Dreamer, Lucky Girl.

Produced by Joni Mitchell, Larry Klein, Thomas Dolby, Mike Shipley

UK chart peak: 57
US chart peak: 63

Chalk Mark In A Rain Storm

March 23, 1988
Geffen WX 141

1. My Secret Place, Number One, Lakota, The Tea Leaf Prophecy (Lay Down Your Arms), Dancin' Clown

2. Cool Water, The Beat of Black Wings, Snakes & Ladders, The Reoccurring Dream, A Bird That Whistles (Corrina Corrina)

Produced by Joni Mitchell and Larry Klein

UK chart peak: 26
US chart peak: 45

Night Ride Home

February 19, 1991
Geffen GEFF 24302

Night Ride Home, Passion Play (When All The Slaves Are Free), Cherokee Louise, The Windfall (Everything For Nothing), Slouching Towards Bethlehem, Come In from the Cold, Nothing Can Be Done, The Only Joy in Town, Ray's Dad's Cadillac, Two Grey Rooms

Produced by Joni Mitchell and Larry Klein

UK chart peak: 25
US chart peak: 41

Turbulent Indigo

October 25, 1994
Reprise 93622457862

She returns to Reprise and makes her best record since leaving the label.

Sunny Sunday, Sex Kills, How Do you stop, Turbulent indigo, Last Chance Lost, The Magdalene Laundries, Not To Blame, Borderline, Yvette In English, The Sire Of Sorrow (Job’s Sad Song)

Produced by Joni Mitchell and Larry Klein

UK chart peak: 53
US chart peak: 47

Hits

October 29, 1996
Reprise

Joni agreed to a ‘greatest hits’ compilation if she could also release a companion album of lesser-known personal favourites on the same day. It opens with Urge For Going, the *Blue* outtaske she’d only previously released herself as a B-side, but which had been her first significant cut, a big country hit for George Hamilton IV.

Urge For Going, Chelsea Morning, Big Yellow Taxi, Woodstock, The Circle Game, Carey, California, You Turn Me On Im A Radio, Raised On Robbery, Help me, Free Man in Paris, River, Chinese Cafe/Unchained Melody, Come In From The Cold, Both Sides Now

UK chart peak: -
US chart peak: 181

Misses

October 29, 1996
Reprise

The album of supposedly lesser-known personal favourites designed to accompany the best-f compilation, "*Hits*". Strangely, one of her best-loved songs, A Case Of You, is on this one and not that one.

Passion Play (When All The Slaves Are Free), Nothing Can Be Done, A Case Of You, The Beat Of Black Wings, Dog Eat Dog, The Wolf That Lives In Lindsey, The Magdalene laundries, The Impossible Dreamer, Sex Kills, The Reoccuring Dream, Harry's House/Centrepiece, The Arrangement, For The Roses, Hejira/

UK chart peak: -
US chart peak: -

Taming The Tiger

September 29th, 1998.
Reprise 9362476202

Harlem in Havana, Man From Mars, Love Puts On A New Face, Lead Balloon, No Apologies, Taming The tiger, The Crazy Cries Of Love, Stay In Touch, Face Lift, My Best To You, Tiger Bones.

Produced by Joni Mitchell

UK chart peak: 57
US chart peak: 75

Both Sides Now

February 8, 2000
Reprise 9362476202

You’re My Thrill; At Last; Comes Love; You’ve Changed; Answer Me, My Love; A Case Of You; Don’t Go To Strangers; Sometimes I’m Happy; Don’t Worry ‘Bout Me; Stormy Weather; I Wish I Were In Love Again; Both Sides, Now

Produced by Joni Mitchell and Larry Klein

UK chart peak: 50
US chart peak: 66

Travelogue

November 19, 2002
Nonsuch

Having mostly reworked songs by others on her previous album, she turns entirely to her own catalogue for what she declares will be her final record, a double disc of new versions of songs from every part of her career featuring Joni fronting an orchestra. An ambitious, expensive project, she switches to Nonsuch, another division of Warner Brothers, to release it. Though undoubtedly an artistic triumph, it proves to be her poorest selling record of all.

Disc 1. Otis & Marlene, Amelia, You Dream Flat Tires, Love, Woodstock, Slouching Toward Bethlehem, Judgement Of The Moon And Star's (Ludwig's Tune), The Sire Of sorrow (Job's Sad Song), For The Roses, Trouble Child, God Must Be A Boogie Man

Disc 2. Be Cool, Just Like This Train, Sex Kills, Refuge Of The Roads, Hejira, Chinese Cafe (Unchained Melody), Cherokee Louise, The Dawntreader, The Last Time I saw Richard, Borderline, The Circle Game.

Produced by Joni Mitchell and Larry Klein

UK chart peak: -
US chart peak: -

The Beginning Of Survival

July 27, 2004
Geffen

Officially retired, Joni set about curating a series of compilations of her work. This first includes material from her Geffen albums. A poorly promoted collection of her least-loved musical period, it has not sold well.

The Reoccurring Dream, The Windfall (Everything for Nothing), Slouching Towards Bethlehem, Dog Eat Dog, Fiction, The Beat of Black Wings, No Apologies, Sex Kills, The Three Great Stimulants, Lakota, Ethiopia, Cool Water, Tax Free, The Magdalene Laundries, Passion Play, Impossible Dreamer

UK chart peak: -
US chart peak: -

Dreamland

September 24th, 2004
Rhino WSM 8122765202

The Warner years make for a better selection, which sold a bit better.

Free Man In Paris, In France They Kiss On Main Street, Dreamland, The Jungle Line, Furry Sings The Blues, You Turn Me On I’m A radio, Carey, Big Yellow Taxi, California, Help me, Nothing Can be Done, Dancin’ Clown, Come In From The Cold, Amelia (orchestral version), For The Roses (orchestral version), Both Sides Now (orchestral version), The Circle Game.

UK chart peak: 43
US chart peak: 177

Songs Of A Prairie Girl

April 26th 2005
Rhino

A few months later, a companion to Dreamland. In the liner notes, Mitchell says it is her contribution to Saskatchewan's Centennial Celebration and that all the songs refer to the state in some way.

Urge For Going, The Tea eat Prophecy (Lay Down Your Arms), Cherokee Louise (orchestral version), Ray’s Dad’s Cadillac, Let The Wind Carry me, Don juan’s Reckless Daughter, Raised on Robbery, Paprika Plains (new mix), Song For Sharon, River, Chelsea cafe/Unchained melody, Harlen In Havana, Come In from The Cold (edit).

UK chart peak: -
US chart peak: -

Shine

September 25, 2007
Hear Music/Universal

Her surprise return to the recording studio, courtesy of Starbucks' label. Working titles were *Strange Birds Of Appetite* and *If*. Though this was well received, the second album of her two album deal never materialised.

One Week Last Summer, This Place, If I Had A Heart, Hana, Bad Dreams, Big Yellow Taxi, Night Of the Iguana, Strong and Wrong, Shine, If.

Produced by Joni Mitchell

UK chart peak: 36
US chart peak: 13

Love Has Many Faces

November 17, 2014
Rhino

53 songs in a four disc box spanning her entire career. Subtitled, A Quartet, A Ballet, Waiting to be Danced. “What I have done here is to gather some of these scenes (like a documentary filmmaker) and by juxtaposition, edit them into a whole new work.” she says in the liner notes. “I had forty years of footage to review. Then, suddenly, scenes began to hook up…themes began to develop. Moods sustained. When this long editorial process (two years) finally came to rest, I had four ballets or a four-act ballet, a quartet. I also had a box set.”

Disc 1. In France They Kiss On Main Street, Ray’s Dad's Cadillac, You Turn Me On I'm A Radio, Harlem In Havana, Car On A Hill, Dancin' Clown, River, Chinese Cafe / Unchained Melody, Harry’s House / Centerpiece, Shades Of Scarlett Conquering, Number One, The Windfall (Everything For Nothing), Come In From The Cold

Disc 2. Court And Spark, Not To Blame, Nothing Can Be Done, Comes Love, Trouble Child, No Apologies, Moon At The Window, Blue, Tax Free, The Wolf That Lives In Lindsey, Hejira, Hana, Stay In Touch, Night Ride Home

Disc 3. You’re My Thrill, The Crazy Cries Of Love, Love Puts On A New Face, Borderline, A Strange Boy, You Dream Flat Tires, Love, All I Want, Be Cool, Yvette In English, Just Like This Train, Carey, The Only Joy In Town

Disc 4. Don Juan's Reckless Daughter, Two Grey Rooms, God Must Be A Boogie Man, Down To You, A Case Of You, The Last Time I Saw Richard, Raised On Robbery, Sweet Sucker Dance, Lakota, Cool Water
Amelia, Both Sides Now, My Best To You

UK chart peak: (not yet released)

Kate Bush: An album discography

The Kick Inside

February 17, 1978.
EMI *EMC 3223*

1. Moving, The Saxophone Song, Strange Phenomena, Kite, The Man With The Child In His Eyes, Wuthering Heights

2. James And The Cold Gun, Feel It, Oh To Be In Love, L'Amour Looks Something Like You, Them Heavy People, Room For The Life, The Kick Inside

Produced by Andrew Powell

UK chart peak: 3
US chart peak: -

Lionheart

November 13, 1978.
EMI *EMI A 787*

1. Symphony In Blue, In Search Of Peter Pan, Wow, Don’t Push Your Foot On the Heartbrake, Oh England My Lionheart,

2. Full House, In the Warm Room, Kashka From Baghdad, Copffee Homeground, Hammer Horror.

Produced by Andrew Powell

UK chart peak: 6
US chart peak: -

Never For Ever

September 8, 1980
EMI EMA 7964

1. Babooshka, Delius (Song Of Summer), Blow Away (For Bill), All We Ever Look For, Egypt.

2. The Wedding List, Violin, The Infant Kiss, Night Scented Stock, Army Dreamers, Breathing

Produced by Jon Kelly and Kate Bush

UK chart peak: 1
US chart peak: -

The Dreaming

September 13, 1982
EMI EMC 3419

1. Sat In Your Lap, There Goes A Tenner, Pull Out The Pin, Suspended In Gaffa, Leave It Open.

2.The Dreaming, Night Of the Swallow, All The Love, Houdini, Get Out Of My House,

Produced by Kate Bush

UK chart peak: 3
US chart peak: 157

Hounds Of Love

September 16, 1985
EMI *KAB 1*

1. *Hounds Of Love*: Running Up That Hill (A Deal With God), Hounds Of Love, The Big Sky, Mother Stands For Comfort, Cloudbusting

2. *The Ninth Wave*: And Dream Of Sleep, Under Ice, Waking The Witch, Watching You watching Me, Jig Of life, Hello Earth, The Morning Fog.

Produced by Kate Bush

UK chart peak: 1
US chart peak: 30

The Whole Story

November 10, 1986
EMI *KBTV 1*

With her most successful album still in the charts, EMI issued this compilation to fill the following year’s Christmas stockings. Kate took the opportunity to re-sing Wuthering Heights - though it wasn't explained why - and include a *Hounds Of Lov*e out-take, Experiment IV, which was also issued as a single.

Wuthering Heights (new vocal), Cloudbusting, The Man With The Child In His Eyes, Breathing, Wow, Hounds Of Love, Running Up That Hill, Army Dreamers, Sat In Your Lap, Experiment IV, The Dreaming, Babooshka.

UK chart peak: 1

The Sensual World

October 16, 1989
EMI EMD 1010

The Sensual World, Love And Anger, The Fog, Reaching Out, Heads We're Dancing, Deeper Understanding, Between A Man And A Woman, Never Be Mine, Rocket's Tail, This Woman's Work.
CD bonus track: Walk Straight Down The Middle

Produced by Kate Bush

UK chart peak: 2
US chart peak: 43

This Womans Work

October 22, 1990
EMI

The Whole Story had cleaned up after *Hounds Of Love*, EMI followed *Sensual World* with a CD compendium of all Kate's albums to date, with an additional double disc of all the B-sides and rarities. Demand for the latter discs to be released separately or made available on iTunes has, so far, been ignored.

Volume 1
The Empty Bullring; Ran Tan Waltz, Passing Through Air, December Will Be Magic Again, Warm And Soothing, Lord Of The Reedy River, Ne T'En Fui Pas, Un Baiser D'Enfant, Under The Ivy, Burning Bridge, My Lagan Love, The Handsome Cabin Boy, Not This Time, Walk Straight Down the Middle, Be Kind To My Mistakes

Volume 2
I'm Still Waiting, Ken, One Last Look Around The House Before We Go, Wuthering Heights (new vocal), Experiment IV (single), Them Heavy People (live), Don't Push Your Foot On the Heartbrake (live), James and the Cold Gun (live), L'Amour Looks Something Like You (live), Running Up That Hill (12" mix), Cloudbusting (The Organon Mix), Hounds Of Love (alternative), The Big Sky (meteorological mix), Experiment IV (12" mix)

UK chart peak: -
US chart peak: -

The Red Shoes

EMI *CDEMD 1047*

November 2, 1993

Rubberband Girl, And So Is love, at the Music, Moments Of pleasure, The Song Of Solomon, Lily, The Red Shoes, Top Of The City, Constellation Of The Herart, Big Stripey Lie, Why Should I Love You?, You’re The One.

Produced by Kate Bush

UK chart peak: 2
US chart peak: 28

Live At Hammersmith Odeon

September 1994
EMI

Live audio CD added to a video first released in 1981.

Moving, Them Heavy People, Violin, Strange Phenomena, Hammer Horror, Don’t Push Your Foot On the Heartbrake, Wow, Feel It, Kite, James and the Cold Gun, Oh England My Lionheart, Wuthering Heights

UK chart peak: -
US chart peak: -

Aerial

November 7, 2005
EMI TOCP66474

Disc 1. *The Sea Of Honey*: King Of The Mountain, Pi, Bertie, Mrs. Bartolozzi, How To be Invisible, Joanni, The Coral Room

Disc 2. *The Sky Of Honey*: Prelude, Prologue, An Architect's Dream, The Painter's Link, Sunset, Aerial Tai, Somewhere In Between, Nocturne, Aerial.

Produced by Kate Bush

UK chart peak: 3
US chart peak: 48

Director's Cut

May 16, 2011
Fish People/EMI FPCD0001

Flower Of The Mountain, Song Of Solomon, Lily, Deeper Understanding, The Red Shoes, This Woman's Work, Moments Of Pleasure, Never Be Mine, Top Of The City, And So Is Love, Rubberband Girl.

Produced by Kate Bush

UK chart peak: 2
US chart peak: -

50 Words For Snow

November 21, 2011
Fish People/EMI FPCD0007

Snowflake, Lake Tahoe, Misty, Wild Man, Snowed In At Wheeler Street, 50 Words For Snow, Among Angels.

Produced by Kate Bush

UK chart peak: 5
US chart peak: 83

[1]Elements of this book have previously appeared in MOJO and The Word magazines.

[2] The song that succeeded Wuthering Heights at number 1 was Brian & Michael's Matchstick Men and Matchstick Cats & Dogs. John Hayes had spotted two strange phenomena in a row.

[3] The lyric of its first line was mutable for a while. In Sandy's original draft it was "Across the distant sky".It has been sung as "Across the purple sky", "morning sky" (Simone and others), before settling as "evening sky" on the Fairport Convention version.

[4] Jon Kelly added these high in the mix as a joke, but Kate liked them and kept them in.

[5] Plans to make a video of The Ninth Wave will be abandoned. It will be 30 years before she will bring this vision to life, on stage during the *Before The Dawn* shows, with Kate playing the stranded woman on film, floating on the ocean - a water tank at Pinewood studios - in her life jacket with its little light. Following six hours of filming, and singing, in this position, Kate develops a mild form of hyperthermia and has a fever all the following day.

[6] When it's released as a single, King Of The Mountain has a notable B-side, Kate's cover of Marvin Gay's Sexual Healing, blending Gaye's electronic arrangement with the Celtic flavours she has often employed."Perfect for seducing an Irishman," notes one wag.